





Sophie Lilienthal.









## THE RIVER OF LIFE



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BY

JOHN ST. LOE STRACHEY

EDITOR OF 'THE SPECTATOR'

*'Most true it is that I have look'd on truth  
Askance and strangely; but, by all above,  
These blenches gave my heart another youth.'*

SHAKESPEARE

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## TO MY SON

EVELYN JOHN ST. LOE STRACHEY

THE BEGETTER OF THIS DIARY

You will recall how in the Inn at Rouen on the evening of the first day of our Motor Tour through France, made in the autumn of 1922, you urged me to write a Diary. I should capture, you said, my flying fancies, put a pin through them, and fasten them on to my page.

I replied that it was a far easier thing to plan books for other people than to write them yourself. But the thing was not destined to end in a sentence. It popped in and out of my head as we skirted the Auvergne, threaded the mountains and valleys of the Cevennes, and, bursting into the glories of the Rhone Valley, stayed our wheels at Avignon. I was always saying to myself, 'That ought to go into the Diary!' Yet I told myself also that it could never be. 'There will be no Diary. Of course not: how could there be if I don't write one? And that I shall never do!'

Then suddenly out of a cloudless sky fell the thunderbolt of your illness with all its dangers and perplexities. A call in the night: an hour or two of that strange half-life in which you hold quite honestly and at the same time that there is not the least reason to be alarmed and that you are face to face with an imminent and deadly peril. As the day dawned your mother and I saw in each other's eyes that our fears had it. Next, three or four days of sudden and swift decisions, fierce action and long hours of suspense, and then the clouds broke, and '*votre malade*' became '*our convalescent*.'

You lived. And we—your mother, your sister and I—were stirred by the old primal instinct to bring you our



offerings. As I sat in the nuns' garden at the *Clinique* of the Sisters of St. Francis waiting to come on duty, I thought it would please you to bring instead of flowers and books and *gâteaux à la crème*, some specimen pages of the Diary once in debate—now 'a command performance.'

You are always a keen, and so a beneficent, critic, but here you were so benevolent that the bedside pleasantries—it was no more at first—soon grew like a gourd. You called for more, and I felt a keen pleasure in writing what you found pleasure in reading. And so the habit possessed me, and before I knew it I was a confirmed Diarist and your Book was in being. If it has merit, you are the cause.

I have gone on as I began by making the test of whether this or that butterfly or moth should be netted and pinned to the paper: 'Would he be amused by such reflections, or stories, or comments on this or that theme?' That has turned out, though I did not realize it at the time, a great gain to my Diary. It has given it the quality which makes the 'Letter' so attractive. The letter-writer may be digressive or *journalier*, on his day or off it, glad or sorry, moody or joyous, but he always has his eye on his correspondent, and, with this, the knowledge that the correspondent's eye is also on him.

Therefore in a double sense the book is yours. It came at your suggestion, and direct thoughts of you are woven into its texture. This does not mean that you will agree with the opinions expressed, or that they were written 'at you.' They were not; but they were written *for you*—to be read by you.

You will understand exactly what I mean even when others do not.

I have pencilled this as it has chanced in an old-fashioned inn in the centre of London (Garlant's Hotel, Suffolk Street). Also it was written on the blank leaves in my pocket edition of *Eothen*. That is not inappropriate.

The book itself was written in many places. It was begun

partly in the nuns' garden, and partly in the inn at Avignon. Some of it first saw the light in a Paris hotel ; some in a London nursing home ; some on Welsh mountains ; some on our Surrey hills ; some in *The Spectator* office ; some in two London squares, some in Italy. Some, again, came to me on the back of a horse ; some in the train ; some as I walked my Surrey terrace or my woodland paths. I have used all sources for the credits paid into my mental clearing-house.

I will end by borrowing the last words of Kinglake's Preface to 'one of his friends,' which is the Prologue of *Eothen* :

'Of course all these explanations are meant for casual readers. To you, without one syllable of excuse or deprecation, and in all the confidence of a friendship that never yet was clouded, I give the long-promised volume, and add but this one "Good-bye!" for I dare not stand greeting you here.'

Why should I not call you a friend ? Our wise ancestors used the word of well-loved wives, and our country girls still speak of their husband-to-be as 'my friend !'

Certainly our friendship has never yet been clouded.

J. ST. LOE STRACHEY.



## AN ANTE-SCRIPT

A DIARY should be as desultory as the Wind, as all-embracing as the Ocean, as dynamic as a deep and flashing River—which is *never* the same river except for one intangible, incommensurable, furtive instant. The Diary, again like the River, is always impelled by a special and characteristic impulse, always starting and never arriving—always sliding away from its source, like the General in Carlyle who is described as setting out for the City of Nowhere, ‘and, what is more, will arrive.’

But a Diary, though it must claim this kind of chaotic universality, has got to be reflective—once more like a River. Just in the kind of elusive way that a River reflects the things on the banks and the boats and rafts that float upon it, so must a Diary. It must also describe and interpret what it reflects, and, above all, it must stimulate and interest the writer, or else it will never stimulate and interest the reader. And so here I am, getting back to the old journalistic ideal of good ‘copy’! Unless he can say it is good ‘copy,’ the editor will throw the proffered manuscript into his basket—and where is your distinguished contributor then? In literature, even more than on the stage, those who live to please must please to live.

It is curious to remember that this supposed low and degraded ideal of good ‘copy’ was the ideal of the most fastidious of critics, a poet and a man of letters. Such is the irony of fate that if I want to give my point its plainest and most urgent endorsement, I must go for it, of all people in the world, to

Matthew Arnold. 'To Matthew Arnold!' I can hear a modernist critic say with a shiver of pity. Yes, Matthew Arnold, and no other! He did it; and honestly, if you would only incline that haughty ear to listen, I know I could prove to you that he is not half so much out of sympathy with the new mode as he is supposed to be. Long before those quick eyes have lost their poignant gleam, the eternal trifler will have brought into fashion again the man of sweetness and light. All the blind spots of literature and of the arts in the course of time cease to be blind.

' If poets take not when they write  
Pleasure in creating,  
The world in its turn will not take  
Pleasure in contemplating.'

But if I am not careful, and run on like this for another page, some votary of the New Psychology will get busy upon my Diary before it is begun, and prove that I, like all apologists, am suffering from an inferiority complex, am trying to rid myself of some fear that has haunted me for years. Then the subconscious will be subpœnaed and analysed, and, before I know where I am, I shall be proved to be a worthy inmate of that great and magnificent asylum—the Wide World.

# DIARY

## THE RHONE AND THE FERRY

*7th October 1922.*—A trackway across the Island fields led up from the Ferry towards Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. By that way may have passed the Popes on their sleek, celibate, imperturbable mules; but we took the water-way. Who would have refused the invitation made to us? It was an automatic ferry-boat. You get in and shove off, and the Rhone, potent and august, does the rest. The man in the bows, with a huge rudder and a bull-dog, is only an ornament when in midstream, though a Collector of Voluntary Fares ashore. It is altogether charming to see that old enemy of the schoolroom, the Resolution of Forces (Science afternoon lesson) harnessed to serve one at call. I never much believed in him in old days, but here he was working away at his proper angle, and steadily obeying his formula about 'equal and opposite forces.' There are strong iron posts, each about fifteen feet high on the two banks of the river, supporting a bar, which does not sag as much as you would expect. To this main bar is attached a rod. It has an eye-hole at one end and is made fast to the boat at the other. The current tries to force the boat down-stream. But the rod attached to the cross-river bar holds her. So she slides across the river, the rod running merrily along the bar. And that is all there is to the Resolution of Forces when you catch him fairly and squarely in the act.

I asked the helmsman first if his dog was a bull-dog. At this he winked, waggled his hand, and replied, ' *Moitié !* ' I then asked, ' Does he always go backwards and forwards with the boat ? ' ' Yes, always.' At this the bull-dog snored. There was another dog in the boat, sad and sleepless. He belonged to a Chasseur de Lièvres ; a pleasant, silent man, but of an inconclusive temper. At least so I judged him to be. To my knowledge he came across the river to the side we were on, returned with us, and made no attempt to get out when we did. The sun was shining—the genial, generous sun of the Midi—and there was no need to hurry. So why leave the boat ? Besides, *À Avignon nous ne sommes pas fort nomades*. Hence I opine the Hunter would sit on, saving cartridges, unless some one goaded him into action by an epigram. To be exact, gently comes the world to those who are cast in the gentle mould of the City of the Popes. Even the river rushes rhythmically and also with a kind of vague reserve and irresponsibility. It seems eternally slipping off the landscape without exactly intending it. And yet, when roused by the rains or a melting snow, it can be as fierce and mad as the people of Avignon were when in the Revolution they massacred the wretched suspects in the 'offices' of the Papal Palace.

#### VIE DE PROVENCE

9th October 1922.—It is a liberal education to live in a French provincial town. There, if anywhere, you come to understand what the poet (*Wordsworth*, if you please, not Pope) meant when he said that ' life demands an art.' It not only demands it here, but gets it. Nowhere else is the way of life more consciously, deliberately, scientifically, made smooth



before you. These gentle, happy, kindly, good-tempered, good-mannered people are experts in the Laboratory of Life. Though they seem so ingenuous as to be almost indolent, every action, every impulse, every expression of emotion is calculated, measured, prescribed. Their city is not a fortuitous concourse of incongruous human atoms, but an orderly assembly of men and women inspired by a common purpose. Here is a true community. The *Polis* of the Greeks is alive in Avignon. Watch carefully that young woman tripping off to business, or to 'Higher Educational Classes,' and you will see by the poise of her head, and by the delicate deliberation with which she plants her pretty high-heeled shoes, that she is well aware that she is about a very serious piece of business—the business of getting a big dividend out of existence. And she is doing it in co-partnership with the other girls of their beloved town. The work of the young women, married and single, is to look pleasant and be in a nice, but not exaggerated way, *très coquette*. You must not let the town down by being dingy and untidy. The men, old and young, and the elder women are informed by the same idea. Every one brings his or her contribution of seemly happiness to the common store. Of course, no one must desert the town. That would be treason. But, in fact, no one wants to do so. Why should they? He who is tired of Avignon is tired of life. Perish the thought! Take another *petit gâteau à la crème* at your *gôûter*, or another glass of wine at dinner, or go to the theatre three times a week instead of twice, or have a talk with your spiritual director; but never give in to any morbid desire to take life by storm, or be adventurous, or nomadic, or romantic. Translated into material terms, *i.e.* put into practice, this means an admirable *cuisine*, pleasant, sound, un-

heady wines at a reasonable price, *pâtisserie* beyond the dreams of Rumpelmeyer, coffee which soothes the soul, and bright arrays of shops in which you can get all that reasonable people can desire or deserve. And everywhere the sun of the Midi throwing his enchanting rays, making all things new and perfect, and not to be changed at any price. The Mistral? Well, a man cannot be always blessed, and it is healthy if you wrap up. The mosquitoes? They only bite strangers, and no one should be a stranger to Avignon. After a little while—perhaps in ten years—you will learn to forget the mosquitoes. And yet . . . and yet. . . . Even though *la vie douce de Provence* is indeed a reality here, could any one with the rover's blood in his veins endure it except as a passing show. It may be—I think it is—this temper which makes France the happiest country in the world. But we restless, humourish English can only admire and hurry on our way, whatever that way may be. We chase the Rainbow by a thousand routes. It is not for us to live and let live. We must plan, and dream, and suffer. But we do not sneer; only wonder. '*Non equidem invideo, miror magis.*' 'I do not envy. I do but admire, and with all my heart.' Truly did Goldsmith say :

'They please, are pleased. They give to get esteem.  
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.'

Oh! happy band of brothers, you have found out the secret for yourselves, if not for others. And so your land will remain great and prosperous and united. Nothing can destroy your indomitable *savoir vivre*. Your noble scholarship in the art of being and becoming will keep you alive and alert to all the minor joys of existence.

## TRIAL AND ERROR

12th October 1922.—My children and I have arrived, and without any ‘immortal moment,’ or *mauvais quart d’heure*, or ‘tragic instant,’ at a very good understanding. ‘Not differing except in opinion,’ we are in sympathy on most points. In the essentials I am, of course, wholly with the new generation. They are right a thousand times over to take nothing on trust, and to test every statement, every policy, every belief, every law for themselves. They could no other. They cannot avoid the dominant feeling that there must have been something wrong in a system which produced the Great War, the Russian debacle, and the Russian famine, and is threatening half Europe with economic ruin. No wonder they say, ‘We will not stop our explorations or accept anything as natural and necessary till we can prove its worth by trial. “Advance Trial and Error” is our Order of the Day.’ Though I think one may easily exaggerate the permanent effect of the war on human society, I do not wonder at its immediate effects or the feelings to which it gives rise. Besides, how can we do ought but respect, nay, revere, those who, instead of an easy idle acceptance of things as they are, will not rest till they know, or, at any rate, till they have tried to know, the truth as to the items presented on the agenda of life? Only the Truth can set us free. All honour to those, then, who desire above all things to know the facts of existence, and will never avert their eyes because they dread the event.

## MARGINALIA

13th October 1922.—Marginalia are often more than the books they deface and adorn. They are some-

times written, sometimes conveyed by stains of tea, hot-buttered toast, wine, tobacco, spilled ink, candle droppings, and mere dirty hands. These comments deposited by the unlettered muse are often the most eloquent of all, and show with a deft precision the reader's mood. I admit, however, that the easier way is the plain comment in a fairly clear hand. Coleridge was a great annotator, as we know from the passage in which Lamb declares that it was a delight to lend S. T. C. a book. It always came back enriched with priceless Marginalia. Mr. Beckford of Fonthill, the Regency millionaire and author of *Vathek*, was another. That sinister amateur of life and letters (both on the seamy side) filled his stately books with Marginalia. They were not, however, of the easy, spluttering kind; but caustic, concise, and clothed with faultless and majestic phrases. What is stranger, they were written in priceless first editions, bound by the greatest binders of the age to which they belong—tooled and gilded in 'Russia,' and smelling of the bazaars of Ispahan or Teheran. At the great Hamilton sale, one of the events of my youth, Beckford's Library was included, and so tremendous were the Marginalia that even the auctioneer's clerk, in making out the sale catalogue, could not refrain from transcribing some of them. My ears still ring with one of them—but alas! alas! imperfectly. It was in a copy of the *Decline and Fall*. Now, for some reason not easy to fathom, Beckford hated Gibbon, and one day stabbed him with a pencil in his study. I remember the note began in diabolic triumph, 'Ha, ha! Mr. Gibbon!' Mr. Beckford then proceeded to get his prey on his most sensitive spot—his style. He abused it for its easy vulgarity and its mock grandeur, and ended by saying that its tawdry embellishments reminded him of the 'trampled roses of

the prostitute.' The well-combed wig was cruelly knocked off that large, kindly, naughty old head, and flung into the kennel with a curse and a leer by this bitter, mordant disputant. Fancy a critic with the tongue of a viper, and £100,000 a year (*vide* Farington's Diary for the exact figures), and with a cold indifference enough not to parade his work to the world! He let his flowers of the margin lie unseen till, as I have noted, the inevitable auction clerk who, like the Recording Angel, sooner or later comes to all, copied them out in his catalogue 'to be obtained in the sale-room or by application to Messrs. Minstrel and Merlin.'

Such men and their books 'copiously annotated in an old hand,' as the booksellers' catalogues have it, are the Augustans of Marginalia. Yet I find almost as much pleasure in the work of the ladies, old and young, who ornament the novels and poems in seaside circulating libraries or the bookshelves in old-fashioned country houses. I remember well reading a novel—by Ouida, I expect—in which the hero's eyes were described as 'those soft brown eyes that look through you and into the depths of your nature, eyes whose glance may mean life or death.' And opposite in a delicate female hand, evidently not ironic, 'Ah! how true!' I confess, though by nature hard-hearted and inclined to laugh, that 'the page was wet with Strachey's tear.' Poor old maid, her wound may have been as deep and as cruel as that of any of the young gentlemen or ladies who parade, 'from London to New England's shores the pageant of a bleeding heart.' To be sallow-faced and timid, disconsidered and ridiculous, provides no armour against fate. As Sydney Smith said so well, 'the curate crushed feels as great a pang as does a Bishop when confuted.'

I recall another naïve feminine marginal note

which was purely delightful. It was in Shelley's *Queen Mab*. Opposite one of the dull and laboured diatribes against Christianity some good lady had pencilled, 'An atheist wrote this.' Obviously! And yet it is explicable in a kind of Irish way. 'The man who wrote this was an atheist. And atheists are admittedly bad men. But we should not attend to what bad men say. Also we ought to warn others against the insidious attacks of atheists. Therefore I, Maria Adelaide, shall as in duty bound put up a warning.' So worked the mind of the lady in the 'thirties. Bravo! She did what she thought right, and so did Shelley, and both in their several ways went away justified, for both strove to do right as they saw Truth and Righteousness.

#### THE PONT DU GARD AND THE BULL-FIGHT

15th October 1922.—And so I have seen the immortal Pont du Gard. It is the least disappointing sight I have ever beheld. I have looked on plenty of Roman remains, many aqueducts and hundreds of viaducts—indeed, I may be said to be an amateur in viaducts and will gladly travel miles to see even a minor range of arches, brick or stone; but nothing like this has ever charmed my vision. In spite of the endless photographs, engravings, and 'cuts' in every book of architecture ever attempted, it utterly surprised me with its majesty and yet absolute appropriateness and moderation. It is in a modest ravine and spans a modest river, and yet in spite of its greatness it is nowhere out of scale, but holds a just proportion. Also it is not a piece of engineering work aping architecture. To walk in the water-track encrusted with a foot-thick deposit of limestone left by this Roman main to Nîmes is to realize that

it was first of all a business proposition. This granted, however, the nameless Roman or Provençal who designed it evidently said to himself, 'There is no reason to be ugly because one is useful. Let us show the Transalpine Gaul that, when Rome speaks in terms of water, she speaks with dignity and beauty.'

In spite of my surprise I would have given a great deal to have come upon the Pont du Gard without ever having heard of it. That would have been indeed an experience and would have made one feel the glory of Rome in a lightning flash. Curiously enough, the first Romantic had this ecstasy. Rousseau tells us in the *Confessions* that on a journey in Provence as a young man he suddenly came upon the Pont du Gard and was overwhelmed. In a moment like that of 'Conversion' he realized what the Roman world and Roman civilization was. And yet he was destined to be the first of the men who broke the Roman spell and sent us back to the woods and fields, and to the unchained soul. I am not an admirer of Rousseau—am, indeed, a natural anti-Rousseauite; but no one could fail to be moved by the passage to which I am referring. Its context is also notable. Rousseau invented the Walking Tour, and the visit to the Pont du Gard was the first important episode in the first *Tour Pédestre* (see Sainte-Beuve, *passim*). Next, it was in the course of describing the tour that the phrase '*Amours de Voyage*' was first made known to the world. Incidentally Rousseau is understood to have invented the French Revolution, though this in my opinion was a much less successful effort.

Inflamed and informed with the Roman spirit I passed to the amphitheatre at Nîmes, and by a piece of good luck was able to Romanize myself almost completely. In the amphitheatre they were indulging



in 'games' in the shape of a bull-fight, according to their comparatively humane manner. There are no horses tortured in Provence, and the bull is not killed. He also is given a very fair chance of killing the men who are wronging him. What moved me most was the aspect of the arena filled with people genuinely enjoying a national sport in a place built for the very purpose by the Romans and continually used for popular entertainments ever since. We paid for our tickets at an entrance designed for the purpose, passed at once along the immensely high corridor which supports the back rows, turned up one of the tunnel-like staircases which lead up to the better-class seats, and found ourselves in about the middle ring of the giant circle. Below was the sand-spread arena. Above, the white stone rim of the amphitheatre drew a ridged line against the clear blue sky of a fine October day.

Owing to its being an exact circle, the arena looks small from outside. But, inside, its immensity is made clear. In the first place, though there were some three thousand or more onlookers, there was obviously room for ten times as many. Next, the people in the top rows looked quite small. Their faces were not visible. But though the arena was not very full, the crowd was keen and alert—no gathering of pedants pretending to be ancient Romans, but an 'audience' such as one sees at an important football match in a provincial town.

One thing to be noted is that at a bull-fight there is no applause in the proper sense—only a fierce roar—a matter of the primary instincts, not of the human emotions. It sounds absolutely animalistic. It has none of the human 'Hear, hear!' or 'Bravo!' or 'Encore!' It is something between a 'howl' and a 'growl.' The audience do not appear to be

for or against the bull, but to be perturbed, constrained, and deranged by the excitement of the bloody episodes. When one of the bull's tormentors had to drop his exquisite silk cloak on the ground while avoiding the rush of the bull, his long, sharp horns glistening in the sun, there was a particularly intense outbreak of these primitive sounds from the throats of the crowd. Again, while the bull sniffed and pawed, and tried to toss the heap of bright silk at his feet, came this crude and cruel roar.

Though one knew that the bull would live to fight another day, it was not an engaging experience for eyes or ears. However, I am not going to be 'virtuous' about it, or to appear to be greatly shocked. I am a great eater of beef and don't want to be sophistically apologetic about the slaughtered kine. Still, I did note one thing. A bull-fight, even of the humane Provençal type, cannot be defended on the Aristotelean *Catharsis* line of argument. Terror and pity for the bull, or the man, or both, are not raised here to be allayed and solved by the magic purgations of art. Whatever delight is engendered in us in the arena is purely sensuous and largely cruel. To sit in safety and see dangers and sufferings which one does not share is not to be defended on the plea of 'a purgation of the Passions.'

As I am writing about bull-fights, a curious piece of casuistry comes into my head. When Dean Stanley was in Seville, like a loyal tourist he ascended the Giralda Tower. Now it happened that there was a bull-fight going on at the time and that the arena was visible from that proud eminence. The guide pointed out the arena to the Dean and showed him the bull and the toreadors. Owing to this fact the story got about that the Dean had, while in Spain, gone to a bull-fight. One day at a dinner-party an

anxious lady asked him whether it was true. He replied it was, but added that the bull seen through his glasses was only the size of a mouse. He thought, therefore, that he could not fairly be accused of encouraging or sanctioning cruelty by his presence at a bull-fight. What is the proper dialectical way of handling this 'case'? I admit it is beyond me. Does the moral obliquity of looking on diminish as the square of the distance, or does it remain as great as in the front row? It is a very odd point and is also probably not a true story, but anyway it affords a capital opportunity for casuistic philosophy.

A more practical, but very strange, matter occurs to me in regard to bull-fights. I have been told that in some places—in the Basque country I believe—cows are fought instead of bulls; but the results are not satisfactory. The cows, like the sensible females they are, refuse to take the sporting view of the business or to enter into it in the very least as an amusing exercise. In the ring they become at once sullen and very dangerous. When they realize what is up and what is expected of them, they sourly and deliberately try their hardest to kill their tormentors, and very often succeed. Therefore cow-fighting is considered not good enough by the generality of toreadors. The bull, on the other hand, like the stupid, vain, 'amatorious' male, everywhere shows off and dashes about and generally disports himself till the dread moment comes and the play turns to sordid earnest. Alas! Poor bull! Poor bull!

In coming back from Nîmes, we drove by way of Tarascon. This meant, of course, to me, as to every one else, Tartarin—one of the most living people of literature, not so great, of course, as Falstaff, or M. Jourdain, or Tartuffe, but in his way as great as Mrs. Gamp or Mr. Pickwick. But what a confession

of bookishness is this? I cannot see my sights without thinking of authors—Rousseau and Daudet and the rest—and when I come upon that glorious apricot-coloured Castle of King René, what but ‘Anne of Geierstein’ must pop into my head? Yet in truth Tarascon is a noble place and clothed with what real and historical associations! Here is the great ford of the Rhone. Here the vast hosts of the Cimbri and the Teutones passed over, before Marius smote them hip and thigh at the *Campi Putridi* and left some three or four hundred thousand corpses on the marshy sod. It was here too, probably, that Hannibal, his elephants, his Ethiopians, and his Spaniards crossed the stream. When one recalls such dread pictures, even Tartarin seems small and dull.

## A DEPRESSING QUOTATION

17th October 1922.—Urbanus, who is fond of throwing literary bombs, came into my room this morning and suddenly hurled this one at my head. ‘What are the most depressing lines in English poetry?’ I object to such questions in principle, though amused by them in practice. You can’t compare things you can’t marshal. But who could assemble all the poems in the English language ‘for inspection and necessary action,’ and ‘report in regard to depression, please’? Still a game is a game, even if the subject is literature, and the way to play it is instant action. The answer must come back as quickly as does a ‘punch-ball.’ I, therefore, did not stop to cogitate, but rapped back, ‘Why, of course, the lines in Pope:

‘Who does a kindness is not always kind.  
Perchance Prosperity becalmed his breast,  
Or else the wind had shifted from the East.’

Unquestionably, if you regard the thought below, and not its fascinating exhibition, the passage is like so much of Pope—essentially, I had almost said, insidiously, pessimistic.

Curiously enough, Pope made even Homer depressing. The great and noble passage in which Hector on his way to the trenches, like so many gallant men of our day, consoles his wife by telling her that ‘unless his number is up’ he will come through safe enough, and that, if it is, no worrying will be of any avail :

‘Fixed is the term of all the race of earth,  
And such the hard conditions of our birth,  
No force can them resist, no fight can save,  
All sink alike, the fearful and the brave.’

Curiously enough, it is in Wordsworth alone that we can find anything to match this in the profundity of its hopelessness. Who can forget the deep sense of gloom, almost of despair, that comes to us from the ‘Extempore effusion on hearing of the death of Charles Lamb’?

‘How soon has brother followed brother  
From sunlight to the sunless land?’

The poet calls up the emotions of Pity and Fear, but gives us no solution. Instead, he leaves us overshadowed by the darkness of his own mood.

If, then, second thoughts were not barred by the rules, I feel that I ought to have said Wordsworth. The truth is, Wordsworth in certain ways belongs to a very different category of poets from that in which he is generally placed. He was, no doubt, essentially the good citizen, the man of natural piety and lofty ideals, the man who ‘made a conscience’ of all he did, like Cromwell’s troopers—the very Ironside of Parnassus. Again, he was the healer of wounds and

sorrows, through the glories of the earth and sky, and the cultivation of man's nobler attributes. Yet at the same time there was a curious strain in him of what one might almost call Paganism, or, at any rate, of Stoicism of the harder type—the type of the fierce Semitic Zeno rather than of dear, kind, Sunday-school Marcus Aurelius or suave Seneca. Witness the lines just quoted and the great apostrophe :

‘ . . . Great God, it moves us not. I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn.’

Above all, the strongest element in him was that of Mysticism. It has been said, indeed, that the world will finally remember him as a Mystic. I agree. By the way, his Mysticism sometimes carried him very far. Take, for example, the bad, but extraordinarily interesting poem on Premonitions. It goes ‘the whole hog’ in regard to the fatalistic explanation of life. If we can be told in dreams and visions what is coming, what is coming is fated. One has only to glance at a few of the stanzas to show how fierce was Wordsworth's fatalism, and also to prove how badly a great poet could write when he chose.

## THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

19th October 1922.—Every man likes to think himself either a prophet or else so skilful at the craft of ratiocination as to seem a virtual seer. It was, therefore, with gusto that I announced to my family as we walked ‘*In a public place outside the town wall of Avignon,*’ ‘There is to be an election here very shortly.’ ‘How do you know? Who told you?’ ‘No one told me. I know it, however.’ Then I dramatically pointed to a large yellow placard headed by the

word 'MENSONGES' in enormous type. 'I learned the fact from the style and phraseology of that document, which I perused while you two talked of Proust's saunterings in the hot, damp labyrinth of his own thoughts and words, dreams and illusions, inferences and deductions. Such language could only have come out of an electoral and party combat.' And so it proved. Since then I have followed with zest this battle of the Posters. I found it a little difficult, however, to realize the exact course of events. The opening shot I did not hear or see, but it was evidently answered with spirit in a placard called '*La Seule Réponse.*' This document, not so singular and monistic in character as its title might lead one to suppose, was at once countered by the famous '*Mensonges*' *Affiche*. Here the official party, '*La Municipalité Beck,*' was vehemently attacked, and '*La Seule Réponse*' was held up to hatred, loathing, and contempt.

Then Labour took a hand, and a placard in the most approved old-fashioned high-revolutionary style appeared, aimed against the municipality of the dark and mysterious Beck, who is apparently accused, among other things, of being priest-ridden. This daring document, headed 'The Municipal Battle,' contains lots of talk about the Republic, and the rights of man, and the Proletariat, and belabours the clergy and priestly education in no measured terms. Finally, there is a Roman touch. Citizens Blanc and Noir and Bleu are named and magnificently thanked on behalf of the true Republic for standing firm and erect before the hosts of Superstition and Tyranny. Voltaire might have written it. Alas! I go before the final struggle, but I would not have missed this civic combat for a king's ransom. The authentic spirit of Tartarin has pervaded the whole business.



Tartarin and his faithful followers, when they went out to climb the virgin peaks of *Les Alpines*, did so in the temper of the men who have been attempting Everest. Tartarin marched as if to death, wrapped round with thick ropes, into the coils of which were stuck ice-axes and hatchets. When, after much refreshment, they reached a summit, they set up a flag-staff and hoisted the *Tricolor*. It mattered not that the Alpines are only a few hundred feet above the plain and present no difficulties. They were approached in form. So with the Avignon Municipal Battle, the heroes on either side are, it is clear, acting some in the spirit of Mirabeau, some in that of the Girondists, some in that of Robespierre and St. Just. As an Irishman might say, 'It is a real sham battle, not a pretence.' Here is Daudet's art. In his depiction of Tartarin he never makes the great man contemptible. Even when we most laugh at him, we feel that there was no imposture. He really believed in his high deeds. That is the authentic spirit of the Midi. Whether it is the sunshine that has made the miracle, as the Northern French seem to think, I cannot say. I am content to be delighted with the result. I have only driven through Tarascon and so cannot say what its people are like. If, however, they are like the people of Avignon, there is no need to search for Tartarins. They grow at every street corner. You cannot buy the commonest and newest 'antiquity' without admiring the way in which your purchase gradually blossoms into 'a museum piece.' The sense of the grandiose cannot be gainsaid. It is in the air. And now I am returning to an English General Election!!!

An English General Election differs from its descendant, a Presidential Election in America, in one most important respect. At a General Election you

have not two personalities to consider, but nearly two thousand, so many are the three-cornered fights. The great party issues and slogans are, of course, predominant; but 'Vote for the man who was born and bred in Penton,' or 'A Penton man for Penton and no outsiders,' is a powerful cry. Dr. Johnson's account of a General Election, written in his last pamphlet—that curious political swan song intended to support the North Ministry—is unfair, but none the less poignant. It is well worth reading.

Johnson generally was inclined to slight elections. When Boswell asked him whether some blunder or minor moral peccadillo on the part of a common friend would injure him, he replied: 'No; it might perhaps be used against him at an Election.' We all know so well that kind of mild accusation. It is given exactly its right place by Dr. Johnson. Some day it might be interesting to make a catalogue of Election crimes.

#### ADOLPHE

20th October 1922.—If I were in England, I should be thinking of nothing but of what was going to happen in the House of Commons, and whether Mr. Lloyd George was going to assume the attributes of the British oak and be only rooted more deeply in the political soil by the all-dreaded thunder-stroke. As it is, I can, with the perfect assurance of delight and calm, re-read Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*. It is, in the strictest sense of that poor battered word, admirable. You could not wish it other than it is. It is not a word too long, and its shortness never makes it sketchy or vague. It is adequate to what it attempts in every particular. And its sentimentality—the quality of its age—is noble and sincere. Though

poor Adolphe is soon love-weary, one feels that he would have sacrificed his happiness rather than have broken Elinore's heart. Yet so great is the art that, when the conventional solution of her death is reached, one does not find it conventional. Her letter of reproach, again, is surely a masterpiece of its stiffness and Richardsonian rhetoric. The style in which it is begun is maintained throughout the book in an unbroken spell. It is as clear as Voltaire, and yet always gentle and sympathetic. The book's very faults are attractive. The descriptions are few, but, when we get them, they have the effect of an old engraving or a pleasantly-tinted colour-print. One is peculiarly engaging. It is the first record in literature, as far as I am aware, of a certain minor tragedy known to us all. When a non-literary woman in love with a man of letters has to endure endless readings of English poetry by the beloved, the human heart cannot but feel for her a sense of the profoundest pity. How many unfortunate ladies since Elinore have had to suffer as she did the wearisome glories of that arid Paradise!

Constant was a true alchemist in words. Whatever he touched he turned to gold. Nothing could be better than his *Journal Intime*. I have lived for months on the little entry of four lines in which he describes his dining with Goethe at Weimar. Here is his comment. 'Goethe is less of a *bon-homme* than any one I ever met.' He gets the world genius in a line. It is just this want that dehumanized his poetry and his prose, his fictions and his facts. Goethe was, or, at any rate, seems to be, an utterly inhuman creature. Or, rather, he was a most perfect machine of steel, so hard and so polished that it could not take the slightest mark from the kindly rough-and-tumble of life. I remember once seeing in Bond

Street, that highway of wonders, a steel shield made in the Middle Ages by some cunning artificer of Damascus or Baghdad which had this quality. Its owner, a dealer, challenged me to dent it or scratch it if I could. He offered me for the test an old Mahratta knuckle-duster dagger with a point as sharp as a needle, and yet strong and handy. I could make no impression whatever on the curved steel shield. My dagger's point simply slid along the surface, polished like a dull mirror. Such was Goethe in mind and body. What a man! What a life! He began to write in the reign of Frederick the Great. He was a middle-aged Divinity of Letters during the French Revolution, and he watched it with amusement and zest as a great tragi-comedy of sentiment and blood. He saw Napoleon rise and fall. He watched Byron's meteor flash across the sky. He just outlived Walter Scott and he knew Carlyle. And all the time, as Constant says, he was 'less of a *bon-homme* than any one he ever knew.' The verdict stands. Yet, if Goethe was an inhuman machine of a diabolic perfection, he showed us sides of the world and of human nature, unclassified and unobserved before. And how great a critic he was of life and of men! His *riposte* to Napoleon when they met at Erfurt was so great and so exactly appropriate, that if he had never said anything else his fame would stand secure. Napoleon clumsily took him to task for not having given *Werther and his Sorrows* a proper end—'*Il faut une fin—une véritable fin.*' In an instant came the answer, 'I should have thought that you, Sire, were the last man in the world to want an end to a Romance.' The rest is silence. Even Napoleon, who was a pretty strong, if coarse, dialectician, had to change the subject and leave the field in possession of the

other side. Yet all the same he went into action with *Werther* in his pocket !

But I have wandered far from Benjamin Constant. One might write a whole book in praise of him and not say enough ; but, alas ! that cannot be.

I hope no one thinks from all this that I am making any claim to have discovered Benjamin Constant. It is he who has discovered me, and I am a very grateful admirer. Constant has, of course, never lacked followers in his own country, and at the moment I am told he is the fashion in Paris. His art and his deep insight into human action are so just that his writings will always tend to colour men's minds—even if he draws a tear from them in the process.

## CITIES OF HONEST PLEASURE

22nd October 1922.—It is strange that few, or none, of the Avignons of the world, and there are and have been many, have been described for us in poetry or prose. Narrators are all for high tragedy, or else for the macabre, the farcical, or the grotesque. Unless there are *spectacles formidables* to be recounted or analysed or sermonized, there is silence. Of the cities of honest pleasure and the quiet life, diligently cultivated like a little garden, they have nothing to say. The reason, I suppose, is that you cannot make much of a story out of the golden mean.

The only exception that I can recall is to be found in the work of the oldest of great poets—Homer's description in the *Odyssey* of the city of the Phæacians and its pleasant, persevering, well-to-do people. It is an exact picture of a community like Avignon. We see before us the town and its gardens, and the devotion shown therein to simple pleasures, good

housewifery and the respectable virtues as practised by a body of Epicurean Bourgeois. Witness the very serious way in which Nausicaa talks about her father's 'go-to-Council' robes and her brother's clean white shirts for balls. Every one was busy about clothes, or feasts, or music, or games. Even the Royal *Ingénue*, though so deeply touched by her hero 'come up from the sea,' was not too passionate. She did not die of love or try to follow her man, but took her ill-luck reasonably and delicately.

### WREN

'Wren struck the ground, and straight a spirit rose  
To write in stone and brick his ordered prose.'

1st January 1923.—I walked to-day in the grounds of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea, and admired how Wren has got the whole of the English character, English history, and English greatness into his building. He has done for us in brick, single-handed and without ornament, what Le Nôtre and the embodied artists of Louis xiv. had done for France and her national characteristics at Versailles.

And lo and behold! as I walked there came to me some verses which had nothing whatever to do with Wren or Le Nôtre, but exactly put my view of the subconscious. Remember, it was not my subconsciousness, I am sure, that played me any trick here and, under the pretence of hitting himself, really hit me. Where the lines came from I cannot profess to declare without fear of contradiction, but if you asked me to do my best I should say that they were the gift of—well, of whoever she is whom Milton called largely and vaguely, but yet enchantingly, 'my celestial votaress'—the lady who deigns her nightly

or her daily visitations unimplored. But why, oh why, in the gardens of Chelsea Hospital, with the young men from the barracks playing 'Soccer' on one side of the grounds, and the eternally delightful stream of perambulators and nursemaids and skipping and running little boys and girls ornamenting the other, while to the west over the river a January sun descended in sober solemnity? It was the time and place for sentiment, but not for a metaphysical wrangle. But, after all, why not? Surely that harmony which we all seek and which poetry—our own or other people's—alone can give us could not more easily be helped to birth than in a place fraught with so magnificent a pathos. Wren was one of the harmonic heroes of the world, if there ever was one. Though he wrote his poetry in stone and in brick rather than in iambs or trochaics, he was not only one of the stateliest but one of the most direct, stimulating, and appealing of the poets: one of the noble band who purge our minds, who clear away the storms, and for whom we may thank God when once more the blue appears. Wren is one of the physicians of the soul. In his own day he was perhaps the greatest. Much as I love Dryden, and glory in Pope, delight, though with a shudder, in Swift, and own the enchantments of Purcell, I cannot help feeling that from 1670 to 1710 Wren reigns supreme in the arts—at any rate, in the arts of his native land.

But my celestial votaress, though she may admire Wren, and though it was at his call that she came to me, could only lend me a little bugle shaped in imitation of that which Dryden used, as will be perceived by any one who has the slightest ear for English verse. And here I may note that I was not thinking about Dryden when the verses rang in my ears or, indeed, of anybody. I was not even planning to

write in the heroic couplet. All I will admit of consciousness in the poem is that for many days and weeks I had been anxious to put something on record in regard to 'that affable, familiar ghost' who occupies the same leasehold premises with me, and who, though on the whole we get on so well together, must not assume that he is 'top dog' merely because I am civil and well-behaved, and do not make a fuss about trifles. On the contrary, I regard him with what Mr. Lear in the *Nonsense Books* calls 'affection tempered with contempt,' and, above all things, hold that he ought to mind his own business and know his own place. What his place may be is another matter, and I have to admit that, if I came to a sort of 'We-have-done-with-civilities-Sir' encounter with him and he asked me to tell him where his place was, I should not know what to say.

'With so much of apology,' as the gentleman says who writes in the local paper on some thrilling question such as the disposal of the town refuse, I will put on record my metrical view of the subconscious self :

#### BROTHER OR STRANGER ?

*'He, nor that affable familiar ghost,  
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence.'*

BROTHER or stranger, active friend or foe ?  
I do not know : perhaps shall never know.  
I rule o'er him, and yet he rules o'er me.  
I am his bondman. Yet he 's slave to me.

I have not seen his face, and he is blind.  
He 's fierce when I am humble. When he 's kind  
I most despise him, flout him—almost hate,  
But still I see in him the hand of fate.  
He frames my future, as he is my past,  
And I in him behold the first and last,



But kind he can be, and keeps close at hand—  
Save when I want him most ; then he will stand  
Dark, secret, dumb, and turn the deafest ears  
To all my calls to help me still my fears.

When night has come he 'll to my bedside steal,  
And sit beside me. He can make me feel  
His presence, though I 'm almost drowned in  
sleep

And here he shows his best, for he can keep  
My memories bright by reading from old notes  
Of things forgot, yet things on which he dotes  
As precious gems. Often he me persuades  
To follow him in spirit through the shades  
Of long dead sorrows and of foolish joys  
As little worth as children's broken toys.

For he himself is childish—brave in speech,  
Though fearful of all ills within his reach.  
And yet I love him, in that he supplies  
So much that brings lost pictures to my eyes.  
If I refrain from frightening him away  
By too much asking, he will turn to play  
Old games and tell old tales in such strange guise,  
I laugh aloud in wonder and surprise.

Not till that dreaded and yet glorious hour  
Of dissolution shall I prove his power.  
Then we must part, and for a moment's space  
(Oh, moment awful !) I shall see his face.  
Will it be mine, and shall I fade away  
A helpless shadow at the dawn of day ?

Oh no ! 'tis he, 'tis he will cease to be,  
And I from my false self at last break free.

Well, my poem is quite serious, and represents a  
real mood, and yet I have my doubts as to whether

the Celestial one has not somewhat overdone the Personification.

The subconsciousness is, I admit, a most useful discovery. It not only gives us plenty of what business-men call 'talking points' in Psychology, but unquestionably this triumph of analysis has been of great practical help to the doctors of the mind. Further, it has helped a great many people out of all sorts of midnight terrors. Above all, it has dispersed those horrors of the secret sins of the soul which used to haunt both the waking and the sleeping hours of the Puritans. It was these ghostly Familiars who seized poor Cowper and drove him to madness. Recall also the young man encountered by Borrow in *Wild Wales*. They 'lay in his bed and walked up and down with him.' The poor lad, as innocent as a thrush, thought he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and so must perish everlastingly. Happily the burly and pugnacious Knight Errant of the Scriptures became his champion and slew the demon though he straddled right across the way.

But though the separation and recognition of the Subconscious Self has been of so much practical value, we must not use it as what I may call a 'poultice-word.' Many people are apt, that is, to apply it as the old women in our village used to apply their 'linseed with a touch of mustard.' When I was a boy there was a widely entertained belief that, if you 'clapped on a poultice,' it 'flew to the affected spot.' A poultice in those days was held to have a kind of selective, automatic X-ray action. With unflinching faith you dumped it on your chest, or your back, or over 'the pit of your stomach.' The latter region has always interested me greatly from the rhetorical point of view, but I have always found it a little difficult to locate in my physical geography. I never

could, that is, exactly see where the 'pit' was, unless the word 'pit' was like 'dyke,' which, of course, means both the ditch and the bank formed out of the earth which came out of the ditch. However, I stray from the point, or rather from the pit. All I want to make clear is that, though properly applied psychotherapy may prove of incalculable value, the subconscious hypothesis used as a poultice has certain very definite inconveniences and even dangers. Neurotics who think that you can hardly have too much psycho-analysis are running great risks.

In one matter, however, the hypothesis of the dweller beneath the threshold has been not only most useful, but has brought with its usefulness no drawbacks. It has helped us to solve the problem of memory. Clearly the subconscious, or whatever it is on whose back the world has put that label, has got charge of our mental and physical note-books. It makes and guards the card-index of our personality, and on the whole performs its duties wonderfully well. It saves the flowerets cropped by time. It will not let perish a single leaf, or blade of grass, that grows along the course of the rivers, or in the pleasant woody places through which we have passed. It records the most trivial incident as faithfully as some great tragedy or supreme spiritual exaltation. All is grist that comes to memory's mill, and (if I may be allowed a mixed metaphor) down it goes in the permanent note-book. It is true that the conscious self usually gets the card-indexes into an awful muddle, and soon begins to get distracted and to vapour about loss of memory and failing powers. Yet even here the conscious self, if it will only stop messing about with the files and will leave its Siamese twin secretary to deal with them, will almost always find the missing

memorandum in time. Don't try to remember a thing yourself, but invite your subconsciousness. It will soon make an intelligible extract, and throw it into the lap of your mind in a way that will seem miraculous.

Whatever we may think of auto-suggestion—and I think a great deal more of it than I know how to say—M. Coué has done us all good service. He has made it clear that, if we want to tap the subconsciousness and get all we can out of the nameless one's powers, we have got to give up the idea of knitting our brows and grinding our teeth, and saying 'I *will* do this' and 'I *will* do that.' At any rate that is not the way to remember anything. It is only by obeying the old rule, 'Stop thinking about it,' that we can remember the half-forgotten. Then the subconsciousness gets busy, and we are soon in possession of the lost name, or the lost date, or the lost figures.

### SHAKESPEARE AND THE SONNETS

4th January 1923.—One word more on the Subconscious Self, though I lay myself open to be reminded that I am like Polly in the play when she asks Macheath for one more kiss . . . and one more . . . and one more. . . .

What was in Shakespeare's mind when he used the words in the Sonnet which I have made the motto of my verses? I know the learned will tell me—I do not want to be such a fool as to mock at them for this, but accept their learning with the greatest gratitude—that what Shakespeare meant by the 'affable, familiar ghost' was some one who inspired the rival poet, who was Chapman—or another. Very likely

that is so, but I take it that whether Shakespeare was writing 'sugared sonnets among his private friends,' *urbi et orbi*, or was constructing plays for the stage, he always had—as indeed most poets have, and even prose writers like 'the humble individual who now addresses you'—a double meaning. His mind was always inclined to put the particular in terms of the universal. I do not mean that he consciously said to himself: 'Chapman is not a good enough poet to write verse so good as that which he presents as his. There is a ghost behind his poems. The man, I expect, is Blank. But whoever he is, he works the oracle almost exactly in the way in which one's dreams work. They put something into one's mind during sleep, or when one is carried away with a poetic idea, which comes in no other way. By the way, that is a good thought, and I'll put it into a Sonnet when next I want to dust Chapman's jacket, and let everybody in the town see that I realize what is going on. . . . How would "affable, familiar ghost" do? Not a bad phrase—"Nightly feeds him with intelligence" is good, too, but "Nightly gulls him with intelligence" is better. It would be a capital score off the rival clique to suggest that they are being taken in.'

I cannot help thinking that, though I have written crudely, brutally almost, of the workings of the greatest mind of which the world has record, and though some day somebody will work on these lines much better than I have worked, there is an element in the Sonnet controversy which is too much forgotten. After all, Shakespeare was a poet and a man of letters, and, above all, a master on the technical side of his art, and finally a magnificent practiser of what we now call 'presentation.' Though he was not a very fastidious man and did not take his art

*en tragique*, he delighted in it. He probably took pleasure, even when he was personally 'on edge' as, let us admit, he was in the case of the Sonnets, in being always in perfect intellectual control of the emotional situation. He used that situation to get in a great deal of pure reflection, pure rhetoric, and, what is stranger still, pure mysticism, for he was always a mystic. He did not merely disdain, as Virgil is said to have disdained, to say a plain thing in a plain way, but, when he had got a plain and poignant point to make (I apologize for the alliteration, which is not intentional), he not merely could not help, but delighted in, a touch of universality. I have given one example: a still more tremendous one may be noted. Who can read without a profound emotion those soul-shaking lines which usher in the hundred and seventh Sonnet?

'Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come. . . .'

If there was nothing else left of Shakespeare but these two lines, one would say confidently that the man who wrote them was one of the greatest poets of the world. Yet I believe it is held by one of Shakespeare's critics that, if you understand the Sonnet sequence, and what Shakespeare was writing about, and what must have been in his mind, you will realize that these divine lines merely mean that there was a very general idea prevalent in London at the time of writing that Lord Southampton would soon be released from his imprisonment!

When I first heard this I was foolish enough to think that it was very funny, and talked about pedants and 'Smelfungus,' and poured out a stream of contemptuous comment. But I know better now. I see that Shakespeare was practising. He was no

doubt also playing the flute, so to speak, under somebody's window ; *i.e.* was quite seriously serenading ; but at the same time he said to himself : ' Hang it all, even if one is making the street harmonious, there is no reason why one should not do it in a way that will please oneself—and also in a way which will mean something really big. You only want your wireless to go about twenty yards, but all the same, you will do no harm by using a wave-length that will be heard not merely at the " Orked Isles " or in the " Mountains Pyranee," but, say, also in the colony of Virginia. If William Strachey, sometime verse comrade of dear old Campion, and my very good friend, could hear me in the Bermudas<sup>1</sup> or at any place within the lands of the Virginia Charter, all the better. He won't care about the objective part at all, but the subjective side of it will interest him tremendously.'

But, good Heavens ! Where has my punt drifted in the swirl of the wood's stream ? I began by writing a Diary, and here I am hung up in the snag of the Sonnets. Unless I push off, I shall be getting a hole through the side of my boat and shall sink everlastingly, for that same Sonnet snag has wrecked more light craft than anything else on this blessed river. ' A Desultory and Digressive Diary ' is all very well as a phrase, but when it means this kind of thing, the police or the public or somebody ought to interfere. ' It didn't ought to be allowed ; it didn't.' That 's what the Fishermen on the bank will be saying when they find my body.

<sup>1</sup> The dates do not fit, but that is of no great importance, for I am only illustrating, not dogmatizing.

## THE CHILD AND THE FLOOD

6th January 1923.—I heard a delightful and pathetic story the other day, a story which proves what an uncharted stream of ocean we are all embarked upon, how thickly our eyes are bandaged, and how little help we manage to give even to those young explorers whom we want to go so much further than we have gone, and, above all, to whom we wish a prosperous voyage.

A friend the other day was trying to tell and explain the story of the Flood to a gallant little girl listener of three years old. But that, though one of the best stories in the world, is not an easy one to tell if you are not a practised and Broad Church theologian. When the child asked why all these poor people were drowned instead of being saved, she was given the conventional explanation that they had been very wicked and that God was angry with them, and therefore He drowned them all. The child—splendidly unorthodox—expressed her sense of the explanation quite plainly : ‘ Oh, naughty God ! ’

How noble, and, if I shall not be thought irreverent and too anthropomorphic, how pleased the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Universal Father, must have been with that dear cry of the heart ! In intention no more glorious incense was ever burned upon the altar of the Most High. The child who so flatly repudiated the jealous God who could take revenge, and so horrible a revenge, and drown men, women, and children because they had angered Him, was but honouring the true God. But I am trying to put what Renan put so much better and with so noble a pathos in one of his philosophical dramas. A foolish angel talks like a French ecclesiastic of the ‘ sixties about those ‘ wicked men of science who deny



God.' The Divine interlocutor points out to him that those noble souls who seem to deny Him are the men who serve Him best, and best understand Him in the spirit.

It is the men who have made God after their own miserable and sordid image, and have clothed Him with hideous human attributes, who are the blasphemers. The men who deny those attributes of shame are the men who truly praise God. The child whose mind was revolted by the idea of a threatening, punishing, torturing, cursing Deity was the true interpreter of the Godhead. It was she who was in spiritual liaison with the Divine. God was with her most when she so courageously condemned Him. How well she hit those fierce worshippers in the dark who in the dim past and out of their own acrid minds constructed the story of Noah's Flood.

Happily the child in question had round her those who were able to feel that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings come the truths that set us free. Children and savages are often the best of theologians. Was it not a savage pupil at the very beginning of his conversion who posed the missionary with the question : ' Why not God kill great big black devil ? ' Again—and this is specially apposite in this context—it was a Kaffir who made so deep an impression on Bishop Colenso by his questions on the Old Testament that he turned his Episcopal teacher into a true Broad Churchman. The incident is roughly but poignantly commemorated in a mid-Victorian limerick :

' To the heretic Bishop of Natal,  
Whose doubts on the Deluge were fatal :  
Said an infidel Zulu,  
" Do you believe that, you fool, you ? "  
" No, I don't," said the Bishop of Natal.'

## ON HESITANCY IN CATS

‘The Dog will come when he is called,  
The Cat will walk away.’

9th February 1923.—This is my birthday. I suppose I ought to write solemnly, or at any rate solidly and soberly, about my failures and responsibilities, and the vanities and futilities of life, and how glad I ought to be that my expectation of life at sixty-three is only about twelve years or less. Well, I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am going to write about cats.

The connection may seem remote, or satirical—there are male cats as well as female—or far-fetched; but all the same there is a real connection between this sixty-third anniversary of the day when these now bespectacled eyes first opened on the sphere and the shrill birth-cry proclaimed my first *Adsum*.

All Stracheys love cats, ‘this side of idolatry’:

‘The reason no man knows: Let it suffice  
That will in us is censured by our eyes.’

Therefore when I made the population of the world, on the 9th of February 1860, number  $x+1$ , the cat-lovers, potential and actual, numbered  $y+1$ . Therefore my birthday is a cat day, and suitable to an analysis of cat psychology.

The great thing to remember about cats, and especially young Tom cats—female cats are usually too much occupied with their nurseries to be very psychic, and old Tom cats too fierce, perverse, and pompous—is that they have the despotic complex very highly developed. Your young Tom cat, black, sleek, effeminate, precocious, dainty, dictatorial, dandified, wayward, and superficially good-mannered,

but really boorish and offensive, is a pattern for young Neros. When 'Smut' gives looks of lazy approval to a new basket lined with silk and eider-down and sniffs it with a weary elegant nose, I hear the languid intonations of the Young Nero when he entered the just-finished Golden House on the Palatine, 'At last I begin to live like a human being.' Somehow that remark of cosmic insolence always seems to be a stronger ground for a capital sentence on the implacable, rose-crowned, beautiful autocrat than the murder of his mother. Poor Seneca's immolation can be excused in any case. Your true Stoic calls for the knife with each breath he takes in or exhales. The non-Stoic, with a headache due to neglecting the moderation and abstinence of the Sect, feels every exhibition of the Philosopher's healthful, temperate, and sane bodily habit as an unforgivable insult. 'If this fellow's right, we're all wrong. Let's get the nearest axe and go for him. How dare he sit and sing like a horrid little self-conscious virtuous bird and we "so full o' care"? It's unbearable, and we won't bear it.'

But young Tom cats are one and all 'Neros after a night out,' and that is why they often look at us with such wicked eyes, and obviously would kill us if they had the physical strength, which, thank Heaven, they have not.

If they had, what pleasure we should lose! The Persian poet who said that the Almighty made the cat 'in order that mankind should have the felicity of caressing the Tiger,' got the whole cat problem in one supreme lightning-flash of creative comment. When I go to the Zoological Gardens and see the Tigers, Leopards, Pumas, and other 'greater Cats,' I am driven half-crazy by my desire to stroke them, play with them, fondle them, and roll over with them in

pursuit of a ball, a reel, or a bolster. So great is the fascination, so tremendous the emotion of play roused in me, that, but for the *catharsis* afforded by the sleek, spring-clawed, green-eyed philosopher of the area waiting for me on the mat at home, I could not endure the excitation of the Tiger's enchanting eyes and aspect. A rough-and-tumble play with a cat produces, however, a complete purgation of this wild passion. After it, and even a scratch or two, I am happy again, and no longer want to stroke the black leopard, Satan, marked: 'Dangerous. Visitors are particularly requested not to, etc., etc.'

Another strongly marked autocratic and despotic quality possessed by the cat is its habitual and ineradicable hesitation. The cat, like all persons of uncontrolled will and irresponsible egotism, is almost incapable of choice. Governed by no moral considerations, rules of conduct, sense of duty, but utterly and depravedly self-regarding, it is always impaled on the disreputable dilemma of 'To be or not to be.' Shilly-shally—Shall I? Shall I?—is the dread ghost that haunts the conscienceless egotist. There is no still, small voice to remind him of his Duty. He only thinks how to secure ease and happiness for himself. As Lord Halifax points out in his analysis of Charles II., the Hedonist Autocrat ended by being unable to choose even his own mistresses. The fear of friction made him lean always to the line of least resistance. Therefore, if 'Poor Nelly' or another would have resisted expulsion less fiercely than the Political Junta who wanted her expelled, Charles would have given in. 'Anything for a quiet life!' made him a Royal slave.

There are plenty of other examples of hesitating tyrants. For example, Xenophon's inimitable Dialogue with the Tyrant of Syracuse is moist with

the despot's clammy impotence of mind. He complains of everything. Again, the hesitancy of arbitrary and limitless power is embalmed in the Biblical aphorism which so much fascinated Bacon—'The heart of the King is inscrutable.' So is the heart of the cat. As I write, I hear my private Mr. Shandy exclaim: 'All which you can read by implication or proclamation in the Annals of Tacitus.' And then comes the inevitable voice of some voluble, inglorious Yorick: 'I can read it as well in my Matthew Arnold.'

'So Tiberius might have sat  
Had Tiberius been a cat.'

This gift, or failing, of hesitancy in cats was to be seen at its height in our 'Visiting Cat.' But if I were to analyse him I must first describe how he came by his name and how he came to us—if the word 'came' is not too strong for his partial and transitory favours, and irrelevant and irregular visitations. A welfare or health visitor far less casual than he would have lost the job at the end of the first month. For this story, however, I have not time or inclination to-day; and probably next time I have the opportunity of leisure for my Riverine Diary the current will have taken me away from cats! So farewell to that gay and heartless, heart-breaking charmer, the Visiting Cat. The last time I saw him in Eaton Square he cut me dead! His soul was as black as his glossy coat.

## SPIRITUALISM

20th February 1923. — I have been discussing Spiritualism in the train. Our want is new senses, not new facts. Where we fail is in our powers of

perception. We only *know* what we feel, see, and hear, and we only feel, see, and hear those things which are able to impress our imperfect senses. The rest—and who dare put limits thereto?—we rightly call invisible, inaudible, intangible, but, remember, *not* non-existent. Perhaps some day these unknovables may become knowable, but only by the development of a new sense or senses. Then we shall know more, though still not all. Beyond the newest sense a newer sense will always be required.

Till then the courteous revelations of spirits can be of little or no avail. Even spirits can only instruct us relatively and comparatively. As things are now, they can *enlarge* our knowledge, but not give us knowledge new in kind. How could they? Try it by an example. A spirit comes to you and perceives that you are ignorant and unteachable because you do not understand what he means when he speaks of an 'Inogotensoutus.' And when he tries to explain what it is, he fails and becomes tongue-tied. He has nothing to explain it by, or to compare it with. It belongs to an entirely new plane of consciousness. It stands by itself, incomparable, unrelated, incalculable, incommensurable, and therefore incommunicable. He cannot say: 'You know what a thought is. You know what an experience is. Well, an *Inogotensoutus* is something between the two, and yet different. It is like each of them, except that it is half-volitional and half-intuitive, and yet effectively automatic. I fear, however, that until you have something analogous to a new pair of eyes on the top of your head able to report to you the now invisible, I shall not be able to make it clear to you that two and two are in my sphere only *very occasionally* four.'

But I have lost touch already. I cannot even suggest the difficulty of communicating knowledge

*new* in kind without leaning on comparisons and *understood relations*, and so getting on false scents. Once more, all I could say, if I were a spirit, is : ‘ I can’t tell you anything because you have not yet the sense perceptions which would enable you to comprehend what I said. Some day you may have them, but till then, Farewell ! ’

## NORTH WALES

30th March 1923.—The Spring is upon us and thousands of anxious families are now debating where they shall go for their Easter holiday. No doubt the Englishman, man or woman, boy or girl, is a rover at heart, and wants to go abroad in general and to Italy in particular. ‘ *Italiam petimus* ’—‘ ’Tis Italy we seek ’—so said Virgil, and so in theory say all of us. But the arch of azure sky that spans the deep-blue Spezia Bay and the coves and inlets that rival the peacock’s neck in hue are a long way off. Railway journeys are hot and hotels expensive. There are also a thousand other reasons, of health, purse, and person which make for casting the holiday lot into the lap of the British Isles.

When my advice is asked as to what part of the aforesaid Isles is best for a holiday, I say without a moment’s hesitation, ‘ Go to North Wales.’ Anyway I am going there myself this year for an Easter vacation. If you love the mountains and the sea, and scenery of high romance in miniature, but not the less grand and soul-shaking for that, you will bless the hand that directs you to Merioneth and Carnarvon. North Wales is, of course, no discovery of mine. It is known, worshipped, and enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of Englishmen. Yet I dare venture to say, ‘ By none is it enough beloved.’

People who go to North Wales and like it, and get great pleasure thereby, seldom realize, as fully as they should, how incomparable a heritage of beauty we have at our very doors. We somehow think it looks silly to be enthusiastic over scenery unless it is at least five hundred miles off. Yet I can say truthfully of North Wales that it can make out a very good case when challenged by Greece or Italy. Though you cannot tread glacier-ice, glissade down a snow-slope, or jump a crevasse, you can get as delightful, as fascinating, mountain walks in Wales as those afforded by the proudest Alps or the most romantic Apennines. The smallness of the scale never troubles one, so exquisite and so justly proportioned is the hill scenery of our most westerly coastline. So magical are the mountain forms, so clear the lakes and tarns, so boldly break down to the sea the torrent-tongued ravines, so august is the pomp of the tides as they race inland up the rockbound estuaries and fill the hollows of the hill with their sea-music. Even the expert mountaineer when once he is out on a Welsh hillside is transported. Indoors he may be troubled by the thought that when he has walked for four hours he will not have risen more than two thousand five hundred feet above the sea. When, however, he is on the slopes and rocks of Snowdon, Cader Idris, or the Glyders, he will not only smile at his chamber grumblings, but feel heartily ashamed of them. He will, if he is a scholar, remember that there are ten-lined poems in the Greek Anthology as worthy of our wonder as the mightiest epics. If he is a lover of painting, he will recall how the great miniaturists give us as much character in the reverse of a locket as we can find in the ample canvases of Vandyck or Sir Joshua.



## TREMADOC BAY

31st March 1923.—If I am asked, ‘Assuming North Wales, what part of North Wales?’ what shall I reply? To answer too closely or, at any rate, to publish too close an answer would be a dangerous venture. Little towns and ‘pleasantly situated villages’ with ‘attractive inns’ look amiable and innocent beyond words as they bask in the sunlight or bare their bosoms and their sandy beaches to the moon. But when they are roused by comparison to a rival, and the competitive goat is raging on his native rocks, they are as fierce as the tigress over her cubs.

I want to go again and again to many parts of Wales and am anxious to pass the streets of its towns without being stoned!

Still, I can with moderate safety venture upon a generalization or two. Here is as much as I dare. Go where the mountains meet the sea. Then you will get the best of both worlds. To transmute Sir Charles Sedley, we may say of the coast of North Wales between Aberystwyth and Carnarvon:

‘All that by tourists is adored  
In thy dear self I see,  
For the whole Earth can but afford  
The mountains and the sea.’

In this enchanted and enchanting land the mountains come down to the shore in troops. Those that gather round Tremadoc Bay can boast as exquisite outlines as any in the world. Stand on a fine day on the little hill above the tiny harbour of Abersoch, a miniature in a miniature, and look

across to the stately sweep of mountains that encircle this inland sea. You will see no nobler, no more perfect frame to your sea-picture even in the Attic landscape. The Bay of Eleusis is justly renowned throughout the world, and throughout the ages. Its nobility, its graciousness, its compelling charm touch all beholders. The hue of the violet lingers on the hills and deeply dyes the sea. I know and love both bays—Eleusis and Tremadoc. It calls no blush to unite them. I can say without hesitation that I have seen Moelwyn and Cynicht, the line of hills above the Roman Steps, Cader Idris and the daughters that crouch around her throne, show a tint of blue deeper and even more mysterious than those on the Hellenic summits. What the hills of North Wales lose in definition, they gain in magic. And yet on occasion they can be as clear-cut as if it was the Mediterranean that reflected them. I have seen the hills of Tremadoc Bay, against a sunset sky of Prussian blue, look as if they were cut out of block tin.

So much for the spell of North Wales, the spirit that waylays, the Merlin that slips out from behind the Druids' Stone, or comes out of the shadow of the oak grove to tell of Uther Pendragon, the Lady of the Waste Lands, or the Queen of North Galis. The man who wants to see mediaeval castles cannot see them better than at Carnarvon and Conway. I have seen many castles in France, in Italy, in Switzerland, in the Tyrol, and in Palestine, which, strangely enough, is the real place to see the architecture of chivalry; but I have never beheld anything more impressive than the two great strongholds just named. And to these I may add Harlech, for, though it cannot boast of such stone girdles as these immense enceintes, it is an exquisite piece of com-

paratively late architectural fortification. Next, the man who likes groves of oak and rocks and grottos such as are described by Theocritus, or portrayed by Poussin or Claude Lorrain, will find them to perfection in North Wales. Then there are the Lynns or little mountain lakes. They are scattered broadcast over North Wales. Perhaps some of the most beautiful are on the little ridge of hill that lies between the Tan-y-Bwlch Estuary and the green carpet of the Morfa of the Glaslyn. Again, suppose you want to see real stepping-stones; personally, I want to see them often and a good deal, for there is an extraordinary charm about them, as the old water-colour painters felt so keenly. Well, the best stepping-stones I have ever seen are not very far from Tremadoc, near a mill where they make the true Welsh flannel. These are stepping-stones worthy of a Consul, as Virgil would have said—huge blocks as big as that mystic *Lochlaver* on which Henry II. stepped so boldly and in spite of the Bardic curse. If you want Roman roads that are cast across mountain slopes as a fly-fisher casts his involuted line, you will find them nowhere better than where the road leads from the Croesor Valley to the bridge on the highway which spans the Glaslyn at the entrance of the Pass. Under the mountain of 'The Black Rocks' runs the Roman road, and at the top of the mountain aforesaid you will discover some of the most delicious of the egg-cup tarns of Wales. To sit by, to bathe in, to fish in, the tarns of Wales are without rivals. The bareness of most of them, the clear water, the clean grey rocks, the pale flowers, have a reticence and vague reserve which is astonishingly moving.

Personally, if I am to invoke a Lady of the Lake, I shall call up her of Llyn-y-Gau, the marvellous

lake that hides in a fold of Cader Idris. There some necromantic artist of the hills has spread a scene which, if we saw it in a picture, we should say was too picturesque, and that Nature had been overdressed. Yet we do not say so when we see the place itself. Here not only are the emotions that depend upon the eyes stirred to their depths, Llyn-y-Gau invokes also those that depend upon our ears. The great, precipitous cliffs, which shut in the lake in what is almost a semicircle, give back one of the most wonderful echoes that can be heard anywhere. You sing a chord as you stand by a big block half in and half out of the pale green water of the tarn, and it comes back to you echoed, re-echoed and again re-echoed as if a full orchestra and chorus were playing and singing for your delight, or perhaps, to be more exact, as if some tremendous *Vox Humana* stop had been drawn out by a Titan organist.

There still remains to be said that the people of North Wales are worthy of their scenery. They are sensible, friendly, and, above all, a musical and poetical people, and they love and cherish not only the tunes and lyrics of their land, but also its wonderful legends, magical and historical. Every waterfall, every stone, every mountain pasture has its own story. You ask why the Croesor Valley is called Croesor and the answer comes back, 'Because a great queen in the olden days waited there while the battle raged in the valley below.' And then word has come to her that the Prince, her only son, had fallen. In her agony she raised her arms above her head, and exclaimed, 'This is my cross !'

And so the valley through which the Roman road runs, where doubtless many battles were fought, is now the Valley of the Cross. The North Welsh people love easy social intercourse and desire both to

give pleasure and to take it. And here comes the only warning that is necessary for those who go to spend a holiday among them. In their desire to give pleasure to the visitor, people in North Wales, whether lodging-house keepers, farmers, or the people whom you casually encounter in the road, will never have the heart to depress you. The result is that you are always told it is going to be fine or that it is only a step to the waterfall, or hill-top, or lake, or ruin that you want to see, when in reality the 'step' is at least three miles, and very likely six. They know you are out for pleasure, and they cannot bear to dash your hopes. Indeed, it has been whispered that a Welshman has sent unfortunate tourists across a piece of the coast sown with quicksands 'for fear of disappointing such a very kind and nice lady and gentleman.'

2nd April 1923.—*A Traitor to Wales?* I have written about North Wales from my heart, and now I am beginning to wonder whether I have not been a traitor to one of the things that I love best in the world. But no! that is a miserable, selfish, monopoly thought. No man has a right to keep the knowledge of beautiful things to himself in order that he may be the surer of his own enjoyment. But there is a duty, and a very important duty, upon those who tell the secret of the hills and broadcast such things as I have written. That duty is never to speak about the beauties and natural scenery of districts like North Wales without urging in the strongest possible way the duty of those who enjoy it to determine that they will not only themselves protect those beauties in every way, but that they will, be the trouble great or small, do their best to get other people to protect them. And this in the case of North Wales will

become urgent in the next few years. In North Wales the people of England have an asset in the balance-sheet of beauty of incomparable value, something precious beyond words. But this precious thing can, alas ! be very easily killed.

In the matter of Mont Blanc, Mont Rosa, or the Matterhorn, the scale is too enormous and man too puny to make his scratches on the landscape of any vital importance. In Wales a few months' work can utterly destroy some perfect piece of natural beauty. One thumb-mark on a miniature will ruin it for ever. The thumb-marks on the lordly canvases of Tintoretto, Raphael, and Michelangelo are injuries that can be ignored. Hence, I would implore every man who reads these lines, and who from them is induced to go to North Wales, to swear an oath to himself to be a protector of the beauty that he has unveiled. Let him treat the mountains, lakes, rivers, and streams of North Wales as a damsel in distress. Let him play Theseus to her Andromeda. The great, ugly, lazy, poisonous dragon of vulgarity, squalor, folly, and futility, hung round with scales of tin cans, glass bottles and bits of greasy newspaper, spitting forth his foul and noxious pollutions, is already worming his way to devour Andromeda. Cut him down, drive him back, put up barriers against his insidious advance. That is a duty, and a duty which can be perfectly well achieved. There is nothing more futile, and therefore more wicked, than hopelessness in a good cause. The man who says 'It is no use. You can't stop the destruction of beautiful things,' is as bad as the actual defiler of some natural beauty.

## THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

*3rd April 1923.*—I am living in the house of my son-in-law and yet my true friend, whom I will call 'Vitruvius,' for he chances to be an architect. He is to be counted happy in many particulars, but in none more than in the possession of the most beautiful view in these islands, and he has lent it to me to enjoy for a month. To begin with, his is a mountain view. Enchanting are the prospects over river valleys where a broad stream flows past green pastures or golden corn-lands, bridled here by a noble bridge and there guarded by some grey Castle, Court, or Hall, bordered here by bulrushes and there by velvet lawns that slope to the water's edge in peaceful pomp. Full of health and ease of mind is the sweep of the green downland or of wooded hills, whose feet are firm set in an English champaign. Happy are wide fields, threaded by winding brooks with farms and cottages and a church spire deep embowered in congregated elms and oaks. Glorious is the sun shining on the level fields of ocean, on wet sands, and on black and glossy rocks. But to the soul that had once been sanctified by the touch of the mountains no prospect can ever be wholly satisfactory which does not show the true mountains—not mere hills or downland, but highlands, where the blue shadows mark the valleys, where the rocks push back in austere repulse the endearments of the grass and flowers, where the water leaps with its careless prowess from crag to crag, where the clouds sulk in solemn gloom or cluster in white crowds to break and part, where the necromancer of the mist draws his wayward and mysterious veils, here letting through a peak and there allowing a glimpse of bare

shoulder or golden crown. Clearest and most characteristic mark of all are those high platforms on the mountain-side where first comes the dawn and where the sunset lingers still unspent. But why labour a definition? He who has once heard the call of the mountains, who feels the mountain nostalgia and who loves them without asking why, will never be in any doubt as to what hills deserve the name of mountains. If and when they are real mountains, it is pretty enough to call them hills. It is not a question of mere height. It is not a question of geology. It is not one of snow-line or tree-line. It is mainly one of form. The mountain wants wild open wastes for the play of wind and water, places which avert their ken not merely from half but from the whole of human fate—places where nothing matters but the roar of the waterfall, the drift of the clouds, the hardness of the rocks, the pathlessness of the grass. More especially are we in these islands beholden to North Wales for the true mountain forms. They cover only a narrow plot on the map. They have no perpetual snow. Yet who has failed to hail as mountains Snowdon and his fellows, Cynicht and Moelwyn, Moel-ddu and Moel Hebog, the twin peaks above the Roman Steps, or the magic amphitheatre of precipice that enshrouds the most exquisite of the tarns of Cader Idris?

And now think of the happy fortune of 'Vitruvius.' The great ones of the hills are his home friends and come trooping into his very garden. From the terrace of his grey Plas, old and mysterious as its hills and as its owner's race, your eyes see Snowdon, disposed in range beyond range of violet shadow. Chivalrous Cynicht honours him by bowing a lordly head at the end of the vista from his orangery. We have heard whispers from Versailles and Hampton,



from Wren and Le Nôtre even, in this narrow glen. Moelwyn lends his ample and friendly breadth of shoulder to fill a gap in this glorious pageant of mountain and of flood. Moel Hebog is the back-cloth of the scene. It is too tiny for such language? A thousand times 'No.' As I have said already in this Diary, a miniature may be as full of nobility and feeling as an acre-large canvas of 'furious Tintoret.' Sydney Smith thought himself vastly clever when he made his famous comment on the Turner water-colour. Wordsworth and Sir George Beaumont were exclaiming with delight: 'What grandeur! what breadth!' 'Yes,' said the common-sense wit, 'about a quarter of an inch.' Yet it was the poet and the painter, not the laughing philosopher, who went thence justified. Turner could put the range of the Alps on a vignette the size of a crown-piece. 'Vitruvius's' view could not be improved if his mountains were raised to Andean heights. Great and small, they are mountains, and salute the sea as equal with themselves.

One might think that Nature would consider that she had done enough for 'Vitruvius' in giving him the best front prospect in the British Isles.

But there are some people for whom apparently Nature cannot do too much. In any case, Nature's bounty to 'Vitruvius' did not stop at the front-door. Go out at the back entrance, turn through a wicket-gate between two manorial pillars of grey-green slate, up a little rising path, past a dry cascade, through a tiny plantation, down a gentle slope on the other side, and you are transported into an entirely new world—one which has, apparently, no connection with the great panorama of mountains just catalogued. Yet in its own way it is as distinguished, as fascinating, as dramatic as the great view of Snowdon seated

first among his peers. How shall I describe what lies at 'the back of beyond,' *i.e.* at 'Vitruvius's' back-door? Imagine an inspired impresario who wants to mount an opera with a mediaeval story embellished with scenes of chivalry—a Tourney or a Court of Love, held on a noble mead, bright with the coloured pavilions of the Sovereign and his Court, with a grassy mound from which the Queen of Beauty can look down upon the lists, and with three or four green valleys or avenues of approach, down which the knights can come, riding two by two, their coats of mail glistening, their pennons streaming from their lances, their squires behind, and their pages, bright as butterflies, in gules, azure, argent, vert, and sable, at their sides, hand on rein. If he knew the House among the Hills, the impresario would have no trouble. He would simply say: 'Go to the home of "Vitruvius" and ask them to show you the Tourney ground. That is your second set.' In truth, art could add nothing to the scene. Everything is there ready for waiting except the men, the horses, and the tents. Imagine a large and shallow bowl of the most perfect green grass of about five acres, with the sides of the bowl not too steep, but steep enough to give good standing in gradation for the crowd, and marking well the barriers of the ground. Beyond these slopes lie groves of oak not too thickly grouped. On one side great grey rocks push through the turf, which is thick and green like a high Alpine pasture, and form natural buttresses for a green mount jutting out into the Tourney field—fit place whence to look down upon the passage of arms. Just opposite is the chief valley and avenue of approach—a broad stream of emerald green flanked by more groves of mountain oak, small but of good form and figure, with here and there a grey rock, placed as it were to mark the bounds. As

the valley retreats, it turns, and its course is lost to view. It tantalizes while it enchants. So with the lesser green valleys to the right and left of the rocky mount of the Queen of Beauty. It really is almost too perfect, too sophisticated, too theatrical, and yet all the time a simple Welsh pasture. Yes, but that is it. It is Welsh. It is endowed with that natural magic of the Celt which makes all the world a mirage, if not a miracle.

'Vitruvius's' front view and back view are his by right of birth, and still more by right of appreciation. He has taken seizin of the beauty and glory of the prospect, as the knight of old by the delivery of a clod of earth cut from the glebe—the primitive symbol of extreme possession. Moreover, he has cut the bench-mark of his own mind and wit upon the hem, as it were, of the hills—cut it in his fountains and ponds, his orangery and his pillars, his gates, his steps, and his balustrades. He has raised the column. He has bent the arch. He has swelled the terrace. He has sunk the grotto. And the mountains have lent him a kindly approval. But beyond his gates and his sign-manual, 'Vitruvius' is free of all the hill-country of North Wales—of all that the tourist sees and of much that he has not eyes to see. He can walk that noble path which winds up Snowdon by the old copper mines, where the water of the torrent lies in the rock basin like liquid emeralds, and the precipices wear a nobler, austerer beauty. Again, if he and the sylvan huntress at his side choose the happy hour when the tourist is at lunch, he can tread the popular but none the less delightful path that rounds the shoulder of the mountain from the Llanberis Pass. These things the tourist sees. What for the most part he passes by without seeing is the enchanted country which lies between the sea and the

Roman Steps. To follow up the stream that hurries from the little Lake of Cwm Bychan to the tidal lagoon at Mocros is to find oneself in a land of high romance—a land of dashing waters, flowery meads, arching groves, grey-green rocks, moss-grown stones, elusive paths, and whispering rivulets that talk between the stones as they run. It is a land of classic fable—the land from which the painters of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the schools of Poussin and Claude, must surely have taken their inspiration. Here is a perpetual suggestion of Arcadia and the Thracian highlands. One would not be surprised to see a shepherdess come from behind one of the huge erratic blocks that stud the meadows. Rather one is surprised that she is not there, with a demi-divinity beside her. In truth, the country is like a series of landscape backgrounds in an illustrated edition of Lemprière's *Dictionary*. Here is the pool in which Narcissus caught sight of his own face; there the field where Hyacinthus played quoits, with a peep of mountain behind, a stream on one side, and a sheepeote in the middle distance. The Dryads look with half-averted faces from this clump of oaks; the Nereids from the tumbling, splashing water; the Oreads fleck with flying feet that sloping lawn.

### THE PORTMADOC PLAYERS

11th April 1923.—I have always regarded the Welsh as natural and predestined votaries of the drama. They have all the qualities required. They are comely and distinguished, and slightly melancholic in appearance. They have about them the air of past sorrows and losses nobly endured. Their bearing is that of people of old family who have come down

in the world—and so, perhaps, they have—but who are too well bred to feature the fact. Then, they love eloquence for its own sake and are themselves eloquent. Trifles by them are clothed in glowing phrases. They are, indeed, true wizards of words, and glory in their use. Mystics they are by nature, and make and tend secrets for their own sake and for their intrinsic beauty, as do the men and women of the drama. Music is a large part of their lives, and music is an unwritten language, like the gestures and the other inarticulate stimulants of stagecraft. Another fact of great import in this issue is that they are born conversers. They talk for the pure pleasure of it, not merely as eighty per cent. of the English do, in order to convey information—as to time-tables, the weather, the crops, and the condition of South-Eastern Europe or Anatolia. But they are dialecticians quite as much as talkers, and enjoy the display of give-and-take in argument. Legends, Memories, Stories old and new, are never distant from their minds, and they invest all things with an atmosphere of romance. Lastly, and this brings them instinctively to the footlights, they love costume and colour, and so understand how to give appropriateness to dress. The first thing you notice after Ruabon Junction is the delight and taste in colour shown in the women's dresses.

Knowing and feeling these things, I was not surprised to hear that the drama is being developed in Wales by leaps and bounds. In North Wales, and I understand it is the same in the South, almost every village has its band of players, and, what is more, an audience eager to see, and competent to discuss, the plays and the acting. Beyond this is growing up a movement for linking up the village players into district companies, formed out of the best actors

and actresses in each parish. Out of the district companies, by a further process of selection, is to be formed a National Band of Players, who will represent the Welsh Drama after the manner of the Irish Players.

12th April 1923.—*The Portmadoc Players*. I was lucky enough a day or two ago to see the first performance by a body of District Players—those of Portmadoc. We saw three plays. The first, *The Man Born to be Hanged*, was written by Mr. Richard Hughes, an able young man of letters, poet and writer of fiction, of whom the world is sure to hear much in the future. He acted the chief part in his own play, and is one of the chief inspirers of the Portmadoc movement. His play, a tramp tragedy, has a note in it which recalled some of the most poignant and menacing of Goya's *Caprichos*. In both the note of terror is not lowered but heightened by the abject squalor of the scene. What Aristotle would have thought of the play is a question well worth discussing, had I time and energy. As it is, I can only say that the audience, like Felix, heard and trembled. One would not have been the least surprised at a Grand Guignol audience being moved. That Portmadoc understood and appreciated the play is a proof of the instinct of the Welsh for the theatre.

The next play, *The Poacher*, by Mr. Francis, the well-known Welsh dramatic writer, was charmingly written and quite as charmingly acted. It was a true miniature. When once you had got the scale, it was seen to be no sketch but a finished work of art. The lady who took the woman's part, though, of course, an amateur, was highly accomplished, in movement, gesture, voice, and articulation. It was not a great part, but it is difficult to say how it could have been better played.

The third play, by a local writer, Mr. Roberts, was put into the programme at four days' notice. For that reason it is not necessary to say anything of the acting, except that it was brave and spirited. The play, however, was in itself well worthy of comment. Like *The Man Born to be Hanged*, it is the work of 'a University Pen'—to use the Elizabethan phrase. Mr. Roberts, like Mr. Richard Hughes, is an Oxford man, as well as a Welshman. His drama in little is practically a duologue between the spirit of evil 'heard off' and an old Welsh woman, poor and unhappy, and tortured by the memories of old fallings away from virtue. The Devil, like his counterpart in Arthur Hugh Clough's *Dipsychus*, taunts her with her sins and sorrows. Now the essential spirit of malice, now the worst side of her old self revived, now remorse, now terror, stretch her on the rack. With poignant realism Satan laughs down her excuses, chuckles over her self-deceits, and mocks at her pathetically futile subterfuges. He has not the nobility and fine air of the tempter in Job, but he has the authentic voice of Hell.

I do not know whether Mr. Roberts has read Renan's Preface to his *Drames Philosophiques*, but I am sure that, if the greatest of all Celtic men of letters could have been called to the Town Hall at Portmadoc, he would have been enchanted to find a brother in race illustrating so aptly his view that certain philosophical ideas can be best, nay, can only be expressed by means of the drama.

## SHAKESPEARE

(BORN 23RD APRIL 1564 ; DIED 23RD APRIL 1616)

23rd April 1923.—I want to say two things about Shakespeare. The first is that he ought to be criticized exactly as every other poet is criticized. The next is that such criticism, however severe, is bound to raise and not to depress him.

The most serious and poignant indictment of Shakespeare ever made is not that by Voltaire or any other member of the Latin races, but that by Dr. Johnson. Johnson was, of course, from many points of view, one of his most ardent admirers. In regard, however, to what he considered to be Shakespeare's faults he wrote with merciless vigour. There is a passage in the Preface to Johnson's edition of the Plays which, for its masterly invective, is without parallel in our literature. Here are the words of the great Censor :

‘ The admirers of this great poet have never less reason to indulge their hopes of supreme excellence than when he seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection, and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, and the crosses of love. He is not long soft and pathetick without some idle conceit or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move, than he counteracts himself ; and terrour and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity. A quibble is to *Shakespeare* what luminous vapours are to the traveller ; he follows it at all adventures ; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchanting it in suspense, let but a



quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal *Cleopatra* for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.'

Now I am prepared, much as I delight in the glorious vigour of this challenge to the Sovereign Lord of verse, to say not merely that the accusation fails, but that the alleged fault is one of Shakespeare's greatest virtues. What Johnson calls quibbles, conceits, and equivocations are, in fact, the special artifice used by Shakespeare to give his wisdom to the world. By them he made his poetry and himself immortal. Shakespeare deliberately uses these apparent irrelevances and inappropriatenesses in order to interpret the spiritual in terms of the material. He knew the danger of being a gnostic Poet, and of dealing with abstractions instead of realities. These are cold things, and cannot by themselves illuminate and stimulate the mind of the ordinary man. Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues. You must vitalize your metaphysical or your mystic saying or contention if it is to strike home. Shakespeare made his soaring thoughts and 'deep-brained sonnets' creative and so effective by 'exhibiting' them—he is the physician of the soul—at the very moment when he is stirring us to the depths of our being by some great piece of emotion in action.

This is, I believe, the explanation of the curious fact that any one who is an eager reader of Shakespeare is apt to be overwhelmed by suddenly coming upon some line or phrase of tremendous force which is let loose, as it were, from the text. It may seem at first

sight to have little or nothing to do with the scene, and yet we feel, if we are in the mood to receive a strong impression, that we have added something of great price to the treasury of the mind—something which is in the nature of a revelation. We reel at the impact of the thought, and for a moment are able, as no doubt the poet meant we should be, to understand and grasp things secret, elusive, and impalpable. He conveys to us something which he could have ‘got across’ to us in no other way. This was no doubt what Renan meant when he said that the philosophy of the future would only be able to be expressed by means of the Drama.

I can best illustrate what I mean by one or two examples of the soul-shaking discoveries to which Shakespeare subjects the mind, as it were, for their own sake, and not for the sake of helping on the development of the poem in which the passages appear. Though the plays afford the best examples of what I mean, the first that occurs to me is a line in one of the Sonnets in the middle of the great symphony. Every one remembers the noble Sonnet which begins :

‘When in the chronicle of wasted time’

and goes on to speak of :

‘ . . . beauty making beautiful old rhyme  
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights ’ ;

We turn from this wonderful display of sublimated emotionalism to what are perhaps the two most astonishing lines in all Shakespeare :

‘Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.’

By these words the universe is affected. We are wafted by them into a perfectly different plane of consciousness. A window is suddenly thrown open

on to the most mystic, and yet in a sense the most real, of all the cosmic immensities and profundities. We shiver on the brink of Eternity. It is but for an instant, but in that instant we have seen something that could only have been made ours and mortal by Shakespeare's invocation. But this conversion is purely incidental. The Sonnet, as a whole, is by no means one of the poet's greatest poems, though it does contain another wonderful and cryptic line :

‘And the sad augurs mock their own presage.’

Here the window opens on a darkness that is full of dreadful shapes and fancies.

Another phrase of almost unendurable intensity is to be found in *Cymbeline*. It is a nosegay of Mandragora which Shakespeare plucks for us, as it were, at the very foot of the gallows. As the executioner and the criminal exchange their grim pleasantries, there suddenly springs out upon us from the reeling page :

‘Your Death has eyes in ’s head then.  
I have not seen him so pictured.’

Take next the passage in *Coriolanus*, where the serving-men at the banquet of the Volscians discuss the problem of peace and condemn it :

‘*First Serving-Man.* It makes men hate one another.

‘*Third Serving-Man.* Reason ; because they then less need one another.’

What a dreadful and desperate piece of universal prescience ! Here is a window through which we dare not look. Shakespeare did not always open these windows upon the metaphysical sea. He quite as often surprises and alarms our minds by some point of practical politics, as, for example, when we burst

in with the irrelevant apophthegm in *Timon of Athens* :

‘ For crimes, like lands, are not inherited.’

There goes down into the dust all the rhetoric and sophistry which try to make one generation of men severally and collectively responsible for deeds done by a perfectly different set of people in times long spent. Take again the heroic irrelevance of the comments made by Lafeu in *All’s Well that Ends Well* :

‘ They say, miracles are past ; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors ; ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.’

Was there ever such a turning of intellectual tables ? It is usually the anti-materialists who are accused of attaching superstition to modern and familiar things. Here we see the other side of the picture. Now, the things upon which Ratiocination has to break its teeth are the ‘ things supernatural and causeless,’ the things about which a man must say *Agnosco* if he is to be honest. You cannot make the great mysteries of existence modern and familiar by a change of name. Terrors are not made trifles by digging ourselves in—that is the meaning of ‘ ensconcing.’ The trench of sham knowledge will not help us to face the unknown thing, even though it is fearful. And all this in a passage which at first sight looks like mere frivolous dullness.

Any one who looks may find his mind attacked by a hundred of these ambushes as he reads Shakespeare. As a *liar-in-wait* Shakespeare has no rival. The plays of the last period are the most prolific of

ambushes. For example, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon of Athens*. But even in the purely humorous passages we may find Shakespeare shocking Dr. Johnson by saying more than he means, or rather, more than he has any strict right to mean. Witness the wonderful passage on the Social Order, which, remember, is put into the mouth, not of Falstaff, but of Gadshill. Gadshill is assuring the Chamberlain of the inn that he has got plenty of 'protection' and will not be used too hard, even if taken in an act of brigandage :

'I am joined with no foot land-rakers, no long-staff, sixpenny strikers, none of these mad, mustachio purple-hued maltworms ; but with *nobility and tranquillity*, burgomasters and great oneyers ; such as can hold in, such as will strike sooner than speak, and speak sooner than drink, and drink sooner than pray ; and yet, 'zounds, I lie ; for they pray continually to their saint, the commonwealth ; or rather, not pray to her, but prey on her, for they ride up and down on her and make her their boots.'

I could quote dozens of other irrelevant revelations, but I will only loose one more winged line, and shall not say where it is to be found, in order that my readers may enjoy the pleasure of hunting it down :

'A dark house and a detested wife.'

It is not very relevant, I am afraid, to the scene from which it leaps upon us like a panther, but since it rang in Shakespeare's ears it would have been a capital offence to have deprived us of it. How pompous and bombastic sounds all the rumbling talk about the Theban Terror and the House of Atreus and the rest beside the bleak, unfathomable miseries of this awful line ! Even in *Phèdre* there is nothing to come near it.

Perhaps my readers will say that I have given myself and my contention away by putting forth my proofs; but I am not afraid. I will not avoid Dr. Johnson's lance when he declares that 'quibbles' like these were 'the fatal *Cleopatra* for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.' My answer is that which Byron used of this same Queen of Egypt. It was Byron's opinion that

'Actium lost for Cleopatra's eyes,  
Out-balances all Caesar's victories.'

### RELIGION AND RITUAL

1st May 1923.—Most anti-religious critics of religion use the word 'religion' in a wholly different sense from that in which it is used, or rather ought to be used, by the followers of Christ. They use it, that is, in its original rather than in its derived sense. The word as the Romans used it meant primarily ritual, ceremony, and observance. The Etruscans, for example, were described as a specially 'religious' people because they were specially meticulous in keeping up all the rules and traditions by which the gods were entreated, humoured, and placated. They were experts in a particular art. That Christianity in the past and in the present has accreted to itself a great deal of religion in this sense cannot be denied. In spite of the fact that our Lord's greatest teachings were so openly and so clearly directed against the most concentrated ritualists of His, or, perhaps, of any age—the Pharisees—the instinctive desire for ritual, which so pathetically pervades men's minds, has laid its corrupting hands on Christianity. With Christianity of this ritualistic kind such speculations as those to be found in the ordinary handbooks on Comparative

Religion may be concerned. Their conclusions may touch, and, as they touch, may shiver, the religion of ritual and of forms and ceremonies.

The religion of Christ they cannot affect or move by one hair's-breadth. That stands, and will always stand, quite outside their scope and influence. Christ was the first and the greatest of anti-Ritualists. The notion that God was to be worshipped not in the spirit but by rule, not from within but by external devices, was to Him utterly abhorrent. Those who thought that religion was ceremonial were to Him the supreme blasphemers.

The religion of Christ is a state of being. It is a vision, not a series of observances ; a mood of power, not a creed ; a quickening of the spirit, not a dogma or a doctrine. It is the way, the truth, and the life—a revelation, an inspiration, an opening of a window in the soul, a new sense, a road to a new heaven and a new earth. The Kingdom of God is within us. It is a light that lightens us from inside, not from outside. We gain this constant influence, this peculiar grace, not from the practice of special rites, but from contact with the Spirit of Christ, by letting His words sink into our hearts. The pearl of great price is ours, and will remain ours no matter what new secrets are wrung from Nature's reserves, no matter what the discoveries of the experts in the science of comparative religion, of the physicists, the astronomers, and the biologists. These are all worthy in themselves, all of good report, and it is utterly childish to regard them as ever at enmity with the Faith of Christ. They are not that. They do not move on the same plane. The pure in heart, the true sons of God, stand as before. No word of science can uncreate the Kingdom of Heaven.

How well did he realize this who wrote that,

though all the superficials and trappings of religion and of doctrine should pass away, love, the essence of the religion of Christ, should remain, and should be enough. It is because the religion of Christ is a state of being, and a state of being that allows communion with God on the one hand and gives the fruits of good life on the other, that there is nothing that can prevail against it, and that it need fear nothing from any increase of human wisdom.

It is impossible that any new learning can ever injure it. The religion of Christ is a life to be lived, not a form to be practised. *If religion were merely ritual, it would be the most irreligious thing in the world.* It has not, and cannot have, any enmity to knowledge. Rather it must, as knowledge widens and deepens and the scope of human faculty becomes greater, grow in power. The clearer and better the lantern, the brighter shines the light within.

No doubt, in writing as I have written, I shall be arraigned by some people as greatly wanting in reverence, by others as greatly wanting in insight, and by yet another school as greatly wanting in learning. The last-named will say that what I have said is not only useless, but very old, as well as very heretical. I shall be accused, that is, of verging on the Quaker doctrine of the inner light, if not indeed on a full-fledged antinomianism.

‘Such an attitude and such speculations,’ I can imagine a convinced Roman Catholic or a High Churchman declaring, ‘sound very well when put forth in the abstract, but in practice we know how such things end. They end in a loose lawlessness of thought and deed, which becomes the very negation of Christianity. It was to protect men from the consequences of regarding religion as merely a state of being, and as an inner light, that the Church was



founded, and had in her turn to found her system of forms and ceremonies, rules and regulations, rituals and symbolisms.'

I do not agree, but after all that is not the question. Whether I am using dangerous language or not, the fact remains that the essential spirit of Christ's teaching is not touched by investigations into the science of comparative religion or by the disinterment of the origins of religious belief or of philosophy. The spirit in communion with God receives no hurt. That for certain minds—perhaps for the majority of minds—such communion may be induced by Christian observances and by an appeal through ritual to the emotions, I do not deny. Men who are devotees of ritual can and do hold fast the true, the essential religion of Christ. The fact that they exclude from their conception of the Church those who are indifferent to ritual must not blind one to their possession of the pearl of price.

But, once more, observances are non-essential, even if we allow them to be matters of spiritual convenience. Above and beyond, and withdrawn in the eternal ecstasy, and yet near and open to all mankind, dwells the divine Spirit of Christ. In that Spirit all men may share, and by it in the truest and highest sense all the world shall be saved.

Time may be shown to be a figment of man's brain. Space may be a discardable convention; and infinity but a return to the place from which you started; but the religion of Christ, the indwelling faith, will remain unmoved. But these are things for larger comment. Past, present, and future demand at the least the courtesy of a full entry. For them another day and a long one.

## THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE

3rd May 1923.—I promised in the entry of the day before yesterday to deal with the Past, the Present, and the Future. I fulfil my promise in the form of a poem, for something stronger than me appeared to command that form of presentment. Also I found that you cannot treat of these three things without treating also of Fate and Free-will and the Omniscience and the Omnipotence of God. Here is the poem :

## THE PRESENT, THE FUTURE, AND THE PAST

THE Present is not here. It passed away  
 Before you spoke—So perishes 'To-day.'  
 The Future is the Past grown thin and wan,  
 —Sudden it leaps upon us and is gone.  
 Rolling beneath our feet it turns once more,  
 And is that living Past it was before.  
 So in perpetual change we melt away,  
 Only to be renewed another day.

The nature of the Future now is seen,  
 As but a consequence of what has been,  
 Not a new play ;—only a change of scene.  
 The Past 's the end, the all, the one, the whole,  
 The Flux within it is its life, its soul.

The Past alone is firm, alone is sure,  
 You know it *is*, though you should know no more.  
 It cannot alter and it cannot die,  
 It does not mock you, and it does not lie.  
 Not God Himself, not chance, not change, not Fate  
 Can blot it out, post-date, or ante-date.  
 It is our Rock of Ages—' *We have been,*  
*Have laughed, have wept, have felt, have heard, have seen.*'

The children of the Past, ourselves we see  
 Shut in the boundless Pale of Destiny.  
 The Past directs. Each thought, each word, each act  
 Is but the product of some fertile pact  
 Made long ago. Set in its terms there lay  
 Sequestered our to-morrow and to-day.

Then, blind Automata, we stumble by,  
 Will-less and powerless, 'neath a darkening sky ?  
 So it may seem ; but why need it be so ?  
 Though man's conditions are prescribed, and flow  
 In rigid channels, he is free in soul,  
 Free now in part, free later in the whole.

In all our calculations, balance sheets,  
 And audits strict, end with end never meets.  
 Some undetected loss, or profit, foils  
 The well-kept ledger, and the Accountant's toils.  
 The analytic Chemist can assign  
 In every hundred a clear ninety-nine.  
 The unknown Vitamine eludes his pains,  
 Though 'tis that Vitamine which lives and reigns !  
 In our account with Heaven and the Past  
 There stands an Item which is never ' Cast.'  
 Yet it is there. 'Tis that by which we see  
 The turning spheres of endless Destiny,  
 Are conscious of ourselves and of our Fate,  
 And know that Freedom comes or soon or late.

Man's body and man's brain, man's senses fine,  
 That to report on all they find combine,  
 Make not the Man. Note now that subtle Lute.  
 The instrument lies lifeless, cold, and mute  
 Without a player. Yet, when he comes, its strings  
 Break into music, are creative things.  
 While he is there the music to prolong,  
 He rules the Soundboard and commands the Song.

True, when the Lute is broken and deranged,  
 He cannot play, for all is spoilt and changed.

But though the melody is dead—or drowned  
In muffled groanings, or in senseless sound,  
We do not swear the player must be dead,  
—To make new harmonies elsewhere he 's fled.

This Parable of sound man's case will suit ;  
We are the Lute-Player, but not the Lute.  
Those who so long ago its frame and strings  
Minutely fashioned, used material things.  
The Spirit waited ; but where and how and why,  
We do not know, to boast himself an ' I,'  
And wake the strings. But can we call that strange,  
When all our knowledge has so short a range,  
And is so faint, so doubtful, so obscure,  
That even of our best we are not sure ?

All that we know is that we live and think,  
Are conscious, are ourselves, and on the brink  
Of Vastness stand, and that there is no end  
And no beginning, and that all things tend  
To movement and to Oneness, and that Space  
And Time are milestones on a goalless race.

But, above all, we know we are not stone,  
Or iron, or flesh, or blood. The mind alone  
Is the reality. The rest 's a show,  
Shadows and seemings, ' Properties ' that glow  
With heatless fires, mere settings of the scene.  
We are the actors, who tell what they mean.

Let us then wait, and, waiting, be content  
Till to the Presence Chamber we be sent,  
And learn the causes and the full intent  
Of our commission. Soon, or long delayed,  
Of one thing ne'er shall be our souls afraid.  
We shall not by our waiting change in kind.  
Man is a spirit that no chains can bind.  
He moves in darkness, but he is not blind.

Arraign my scheme of Present, Future, Past,  
 Call me a Fatalist, and strive to blast  
 My theory as a Heresy or Schism,  
 'The worn-out clothing of Materialism.'

Can I reply ? Yes, be assured I can,  
 And shall convince you 'tis not God, but man  
 That I dethrone, and that my old new plan  
 Is but a transcript of the stern behest  
 That God sees all, knows all, and is possessed  
 Of all that was, and is, and is to be.  
 'Tis only God we can define as Free.  
 For Him the last trump has already blown.  
 His consciousness is all, and He alone  
 Unchanged and motionless :—His state and station  
 A central calm amidst an endless agitation.

But can that be ? Yes, be it must if God  
 Is God, and not a super-man, whose nod  
 Can be engaged by Prayer or Ritual skill  
 Which binds the Godhead through the human will.  
 Both Man and God cannot at once be free.  
 As well rank Greatness with Infinity.

But our conditions ? Those, no doubt, depend  
 On consequence and circumstance, and send  
 Forth endless convolutions. But who dare  
 Say we are Nothing speeding to Nowhere,  
 The raving Helots of a blank despair ?

But though we cannot stir or change a will  
 Which runs on adamantine rails, yet man has still  
 His consciousness, and, though so close confined,  
 He some day on his prison floor will find  
 An order for release. Its nature who can guess ?  
 Absorption or Survival ? No or Yes ?  
 Change or no change ? Let each for each descry  
 The whirling circle. I predict that I,  
 Since I am conscious, cannot wholly die.

What is material must its laws obey,  
Must ebb and flow, bud, germinate, decay.  
The soul is that which does not pass away.

Therefore let men when eager in debate  
They canvass God and Truth, Free-will and Fate,  
And strive the Past and Future to relate,  
Remember this :—We are not dead, though bound,  
And in our ' Fated Happenings ' God is found.

### THE PROBLEM OF INSPIRATION

*4th May 1923.*—The poem which precedes this entry, or, at any rate, the first draft of the greater part of it, came to me almost as if dictated by some one or something outside me. I had made no sort of decision to write a poem on that or any other subject. What is more, I had not the problems involved at the moment especially in my head—though, no doubt, I had some weeks before had a long discussion on the matter. I am, however, convinced that I did not say to myself, as I might well have done, ' This would make an admirable subject of a poem in the style of Dryden.' All I know is that I woke with the first couplets half formed in my head, got up, and directly after breakfast sat down and with what for me was singular ease put pen to paper. Making due allowance for my verses not being of any great importance and for the fact that I am not a poet, I should say that I was experiencing on a very small scale what the poets call an inspiration, and I an external suggestion—the state to which Milton alludes when he speaks of :

' . . . My Celestial Votaress, who deigns  
Her nightly visitations unimplored.'

Whether this manifestation of mental activity, apparently unvolitioned, is really entitled to this

explanation, or what inspiration is, and how it fits in with the problem of the Unconscious and Conscious Selves and the Memory, is a curious matter and well worth discussion.

Do we receive *external* inspirations, admonitions, and revelations, or are all the mental phenomena which we group under these names really 'made in the House'? Or, again, are some home-made, and do some come from outside? There is a good deal to be said for the made-in-the-house view. It is based on the general theory of the Subconsciousness—a theory which in the main I feel we must accept if we are to be ruled by Truth and Reason, and not by Prejudice. The Subconsciousness may be said to preside over a vast Register of all the sense-impressions which we have received since our senses were capable of reporting anything, and possibly also a certain number of pre-natal hereditary impressions with which it was endowed at the moment of conception. Every emanation of the body may possibly carry with it certain impressions, and those hereditary impressions may be capable of expansion as is a desiccated Japanese imitation flower as soon as it is put into water. In any case, the Subconscious Self possesses a complete register of past impressions. All are entered there. To this register a card-index of a very imperfect and incomplete kind has been made, or, at any rate, provided for, by the Conscious Self. This index, called Memory, is constantly consulted by the Conscious Self. It is also handled by the Subconscious with great accuracy and resource whenever the Conscious Self can manage to make the Subconscious understand that he is wanted to produce a particular entry which the Conscious Self cannot discover for himself. But this is not all. Without instruction or suggestion, in day-dreams, night-

dreams, brown-studies, mind-wanderings, and, most of all, in lunacies and deliriums, the Subconscious, who apparently is fond of vague rummagings in the vast files of Sense-Records, pushes up all sorts of selections from the Memory into the Conscious Mind. 'Just look at this. It might help you in your reflections on Spontaneous Generation or Incommensurables. This is a queer thing, isn't it? How does this fit in with Predestination? Isn't this forgotten entry rather apposite to your line of thought on survival and on the fact of death, and death generally, and, still more, on the Fourth Dimension?' This sort of thing is going on perpetually. Usually the Conscious Mind says 'Get away!' and bangs the door. Sometimes, however, the Conscious Mind, when tired, or vacant as in sleep or day-dreams, does not push the intruders back as disturbing his practical reflections, but allows them in, and often with very useful and happy results. And then we talk of inspiration and revelation! On the other hand, when the results are unintelligible, or foolish, or irritating, or injurious, we call them 'madness,' 'insanity,' 'possession.' According to this view, Inspiration is merely a resort to the Files by the Subconsciousness with results that surprise and astonish the Conscious Self.

To put it in another way. The Subconscious does not merely report to the Conscious the news brought in by the Senses, but also reports its own researches in the Files—researches which are specially active during sleep, *i.e.* when the Senses are not bringing in new copy.

That is a good theory, and probably a true theory as far as it goes, and obviously one which pleases the Materialist and the Automatist. I doubt, however, very much whether it is the whole story. In the



first place, I believe that the Conscious Self obtains food for reflection not merely out of the Memory Files, but from a private file of his own over which the Subconscious has no control. This is the File of Abstract Conceptions and Ideas—the File in which the elemental thoughts about which the Senses are unable to bring reports are chronicled. Here are stored conceptions such as those of Ultimate Death and Ultimate Life, of the Finite and the Infinite, of the Continuum, of Relativity, of Movement, of Change, of Variation, of Proportion, of Dimensions, of Vibration, of Greatness and Smallness, of being, and becoming, and ceasing to be. Here, too, are stored the ideas of Volition, Truth, Good and Evil, Whence and Whither, Spirit and Mind, Purity in its ultimate and fullest sense, Love, Allness and Oneness; and God. I write without attempt at completeness in my catalogue or at any scientific analysis or sequence, but merely illustratively to my main thought.

Note incidentally that all the conceptions are subject to the measuring rod of Reason—a function which has nothing to do with Sense Reports, in its origin, though, no doubt, it measures them as it measures everything else conceivable by the human intelligence—everything, that is, which is measurable. And what is not?

The verses themselves, whether externally suggested or subconsciously created, do not, I think, require amplification, or comment, or explanation, except on two points. The first is concerned with the Present. It is obvious that the Present, if it is 'a state of being,' is one so transient, so quick in movement, that you cannot catch it or hold it. It is gone before it is realized. Indeed, it may be said that you do not enjoy the Present till it has become a memory—a very recent memory, but still a memory.

I say I am enjoying writing this section of my Diary. But that is only in a way of speaking. What I am enjoying is the immediate and only just recorded memory of the thoughts which moved me at the moment of their conception.

It is the same with action and emotion. What we enjoy or deplore is the very recent memory. But memory is essentially a record of the Past, and so part of the Past. Therefore the Present is not realized by us, and so for us is non-existent till it is the Past. Therefore it is accurate to say that the Past embraces and contains the Present as well as the Future.

That the Past is preparing, propagating, and producing the Future in its womb is too clear to need much amplification. Every act has its consequences. They are inevitable, irrevocable, as far as they go, and cannot be eliminated, though, of course, they meet and are interwoven with the consequences of millions of other acts. I am here to-day in consequence of billions upon billions of acts and events and happenings which are behind me, just as the Sun is shining and the Planets keeping their courses and the whole Stellar System is moving somewhere, because of happenings behind them. 'Behind' is not a good word because it seems to assume the existence of those lately exposed impostors, Time and Space, but it must serve, as the word is as yet wanting to express precedence or apparent precedence—there is no precedence on the circumference of a circle—in the Continuum. At any and every given moment a man, or a star, or a piece of matter (and possibly piece of spirit) has got the endless, beginningless Universe 'back of him and them,' as they say in America. If 50,000 years ago a Neolithic man had on a certain morning turned left instead of right as he

left his cave, I should not have been here to-day. That is true. It is equally true that he could not have turned left instead of right, because he was, as it were, bred and produced and woven in the weaving-sheds of the Past, to turn left instead of right! Some predestination there!

The other point is less obvious, but perhaps as important. I talk, as people always do, as if the Future were passing into the Present and the Present into the Past, and therefore as if the Present were in a state of movement. But, as Mr. Bertram Russell has shown us, 'a state of movement' is an inconceivable, incomprehensible idea. If it existed, you could be in two places at once, no matter how short a time you stopped in either. It is not *movement*, but *change* that marks the alteration from Future to Past. But change is the antithesis of movement. It has a kick in it. You were one thing; lo and behold, you have become another! It is a magic-like operation, not a rapid growth. The spell is cast, and, before you know what has happened, you are a camel or an elephant instead of a man, or you find yourself in Russia, or China, or Michigan, when you thought you were in Whitehall. There was no intervening process—no fast or slow gradations of growth or decay.

It is by change, not movement, that the Future becomes the Past. There is a jolt, not a slide, and the thing is done. Compare the difference between an ordinary progressive clock which moves on and an electric clock which goes in jerks. What are the consequences of adopting this conception I do not profess to be able to work out, but of its truth I feel conscious.

## SECRECY

*5th May 1923.*—Just now ‘the world thinks,’ and, in a sense, ‘I think so too,’ that Secrecy is the worst of ills. But, if that is the case, ought we not to abolish it and live in glass-houses with all the doors open and all the cards on the table ?

Yes, Secrecy is a great, perhaps the greatest, of all the sources of depravity. If you could effectively bind human beings never to use Secrecy, you would have conferred an untold benefit on Society. You would have stopped treason domestic, thieving, and corruption at their very source.

But, alas ! you can’t. Men will not be so controlled, either in their own minds or in a limited co-operation. ‘I’ll share my knowledge with you if you’ll promise not to tell any one else.’ Till you can stop that whispered aside, you will have to put up with Secrecy. Besides, Secrecy is often as great an instrument for good as for evil. It is a poison, but poisons in controlled doses may be as necessary for the body politic as arsenic is sometimes for the body natural.

Still, Secrecy is the dreadful defiler of hearts. It devitalizes that potent antiseptic, shame. Remember how Secrecy works at home and proves a keener Pandar than Galeotto or the tale of Launcelot. ‘What would people say if I were to do what you ask ?—Oh, it is utterly impossible. I could not face the shame of it.’—‘But they will never know, unless you tell them. How could they ?’—‘Are you quite sure ?’—‘As sure as that I live !’—‘Very well, then, at twelve, at the south end of the terrace ; and oh ! don’t, don’t betray me.’

Secrecy is capable of playing in the great world of business and affairs almost as vile a part.

‘If you take £10,000 worth of these shares practically at par, you will be able to sell them in a week for £15,000. It is nothing but throwing away money not to buy them.’—‘But in my position, how can I? I admit *this* Company has nothing to do with my office, and that, even if it had, my holding a few of its shares for a week would not alter its policy or help it in the very least. Still I . . .’ ‘But who’s going to know? You haven’t got to shout it out in the streets, have you? You need not even buy in your own name. Hundreds of people do all their buying in other people’s names.’ ‘But it might come out.’ ‘Impossible. Did you ever hear of my buying shares in some one else’s name? But I do it constantly.’ ‘Do you really? Oh, very well then, perhaps I will, if you are sure it will never come out. But, I say, why not £20,000 while we are about it?’ ‘All right. I will tell my Brokers: in what name shall I put them?’

Yet look at the other side. How often a good cause gets secret help from people whose hearts are touched, but who dare not come into the open. Secrecy helped hundreds of American slaves to escape. Secrecy has saved its thousands in Russia.

In fine, Secrecy is a neutral thing, an instrument both for good and evil, and it will never be got rid of till some plan is devised for preventing men having confidences with their own minds and their own consciences. The wheels of the world could not go round if Secrecy were abolished.

## LOGIC

6th May 1923.—‘ Natural parts and good judgments rule the world. States are not governed by Ergotisms. Many have ruled well, who could not, perhaps, define a commonwealth ; and they who understand not the globe of the earth, command a great part of it.’ I agree with Sir Thomas Browne. And, quaintly enough, it is Ergotism—*i.e.* Logic—that makes me agree. In public affairs your premises are almost always doubtful. You have to guess them, and you often guess wrong. But if you argue closely—*i.e.* ergotistically—from false premises, you are certain to get a wrong conclusion. If you do not try to be logical and to obey ergotism, you may very possibly get instinctively to a right conclusion.

## THE NATURE OF THE CELT

7th May 1923.—In the last resort the problem of the Irish race is based upon a fundamental misapprehension. The Irishman was perfectly right who gave it as the final grievance of the Irishman against the Anglo-Saxon, ‘ And then you won’t even believe that we don’t speak the truth ! ’ In the same way, one might, if one were in the habit of making epigrammatic charges, charge the Irish people with the fact that they will not even believe that we are sentimental liars, and by our sentimental talk have again and again led the Irish to think that we are going to be far more idiotically generous and sentimentally absurd than we have any real intention of being.

Till we know how to manage the donkey—the

cleverest of animals, remember—we shall never understand the Irish problem.

‘The thing most necessary in the driving and managing of donkeys is a mixture of cruelty and intrigue, diplomacy and brutality. That is why the Celtic races like driving donkeys and do it so successfully.’ So spake a cynical politician. Incidentally, his words provide an answer to the question why the English hate driving donkeys. Tell your coachman to get a donkey when the odd-job pony dies, and mark his face !

### THE ENGLISHMAN'S NATURE

*8th May 1923.*—I wrote yesterday of the Irishman. To-day it must be the Englishman.

The Englishman has been called domineering. He is not so in reality, but he is always finding himself in circumstances where action is necessary, where something has got to be done, and where he is the only person who appears able to do it. The French lost India because they forced Brahmin soldiers to dig trenches. They argued logically enough—a soldier must obey orders whatever they are. We gained India because we scratched our heads and said : ‘ Well, here ’s a pretty state of things. Still, soldier or no soldier, if a man says his caste will be broken by digging earth, it wouldn’t be fair to make him do it, especially if, when you try, he will lie down and die. Military obedience is all right, and of course absolutely necessary, but, pushed as far as that, it is not business. We had better try and work it some other way.’

Did not Mirabeau’s father, ‘ the friend of man,’ say of us : ‘ These miserable islanders do not know, and will probably not know till their whole wretched

system has exploded, whether they are living under a Monarchy or a Republic, a Democracy or an Oligarchy ?' His logical conclusion that we must inevitably be ruined by our muddle-headedness and impotence in analysis sounds well enough, but was in fact a hopeless blunder.

### MORE ABOUT SECRECY

9th May 1923.—A friend of mine with whom I talked over the question of Secrecy has sent me the following comment on Secrecy and its place in the body-politic :

' All things written on Secrecy demand a postscript or *caveat*. We grow zealously angry about the secrets that come out and cause a scandal, but public opinion has necessarily nothing to say about the secrets that are kept, and they are often the most soul-shaking and world-shaking secrets of all. By the nature of the case, neither I nor any other man can write down the unknown in plain terms, but accident enables one occasionally to lift a corner of the veil of even the inner shrine. People in general probably do not know that there is, or perhaps I should say there used to be, an inner and secret function of the Constitution, or at any rate of the Administration, which was never even faintly alluded to in books or newspapers or common talk, and yet was of great importance, and perhaps is at this very moment. At any rate it used to be whispered that a Prime Minister, when he went out of office, handed to his successor half a sheet of notepaper with a few names upon it, perhaps only three or four. They were the names of prominent men who ought not to be given any of the great posts in the gift of the Prime Minister because they were men of specially bad character, or men who had committed some fault which, though in the public interest it was thought better not to



expose and punish, showed them to be unworthy of trust; men, in fact, against whom the word *Turpissimus* must be written in the final register of the State. These were the men upon whom some dire suspicion, though perhaps barren of legal proof, had fallen; men who had committed some supremely disgraceful act, who had lied in their own interests and against the interests of their native land, who had betrayed their colleagues to some Foreign Power, who, in order to levy or to resist blackmail, had imperilled the public welfare; men who had consciously or unconsciously taken a bribe; men who must be regarded as "bad men," however low the standard applied, and however lenient the judges. Yet, though deeply tainted, such men often contrive to escape exposure, and, for all the world knows, are of the highest character. Hence the names on the secret list.

'The highest authorities in the Church were said to have such another small and very secret list which would prevent certain men getting to the Episcopal Bench who would defile it, though these men could not be broken without too great a public scandal. This list has accounted before now, say the cynics below their breaths, for an unexpected *Nolo episcopari*. A similar list, passed from one Lord Chancellor to another, or lodged with the Sovereign, was felt to be the true explanation why some great legal luminary never reached the Bench.'

Any one can make good points against the system under which this tiny rivulet of Secrecy flows unseen in the Constitution. It may no doubt involve terrible cruelty to men who have been under unjust suspicion. It is the stab in the back, the blow in the dark, from which no man can protect himself. He does not know when it comes or whence it comes, and cannot therefore give what may be a perfectly good answer to a charge founded on a pure delusion. All

his life he has to fight a shadow. He is always coming up against some impalpable and inexplicable obstacle to advancement and success. And yet, if people would only tell him the nature of this haunting ghost, he could lay it in an instant, and show that he had nothing to be ashamed of, and nothing to conceal.

In spite of these obvious drawbacks, this particular kind of Secrecy, with all its terrible risks and injustices, will go on, and is bound to go on. 'I cannot give you any reasons, but if you are wise you will never trust—in any great matter.' No just man will like using that formula, or will indeed ever use it except in an extreme case, but you cannot prevent the man who is eager for the good of his country, and determined to leave nothing undone which might help her, using it on occasion. That is why there is somewhere in every nation and in every Government, and always must be, some element of real and absolute Secrecy. That Government is best and happiest which relies least on Secrecy, but, in the world constituted as it is, the State in which there are no secrets runs the risk of being too good to live.

### A DAY-DREAM OF THE GATES OF HELL

*12th May 1923.*—I have all my life been given to day-dreams and day-dramas, or perhaps I should call them waking dreams and dramas. I suppose twenty-four hours never pass in which I do not have them. In one sense, no doubt, they are part of the universal habit which exists in all children and persists in millions of grown-up men and women of telling oneself stories. When I say 'telling oneself,' of course I am rather begging the question, for perhaps it is somebody else, the unconscious and not the conscious, that is acting as narrator. However,

I am not trying to be psychological on this occasion, but merely want to record the facts.

Here is one of the most elaborate stories that I ever dreamed or told myself. It was used, no doubt, half consciously, but much more unconsciously, partly to soothe physical pain, and still more psychical anxiety, which I was experiencing owing to the fact that some one dear to me was undergoing a serious operation. Those who read the story will think it strange perhaps that one should have quieted oneself with such a piece of high-coloured intensive rhetoric ; but the ways of human creatures and of the human mind are strange beyond conjecture. I can only say that I have again and again found that the things which excite other people calm me, and *vice versa*. I can put myself to sleep by thinking out a political leader. A novel, however light, would keep me awake ! In the case which I am about to give I was inspired by a passage in *The Pilgrim's Progress* :

‘ So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him ; but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City to go out and take Ignorance and bind him hand and foot and have him away. Then they took him up and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill and put him in there. *Then I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction. So I awoke, and behold it was a dream !*’

These words set up a long chain of thought and ultimately led me to form an elaborate day-dream.

I stood at the Gates of Hell.

He who has seen the entrance to the Pisani Villa at Stra can best form an impression of what I beheld. He will remember the stupendous insolence and grandeur of that strange enormity of architectural

magnanimity. Huge pillars, wreathed not with garlands of fruit and flowers, but with the spirals of flying staircases, flank the vast portal—itself a huge triumphal arch. On each side the colossal boundary walls slope away in long perspective, pierced and fretted with minor gates and private posterns, some actual, some merely decorative achievements, but all conceived on a scale of gigantic magnificence. Who drew them I know not, but if I were told that Piranesi in the wildest and yet most grandiose and most terrible of his opium dreams flung those gates, pillars, arches, walls, and columns upon the drawing-board of a brother-architect, I should not doubt the legend. But at Stra the cracked buff stucco resolves the turbulence and menace of the design. In my dream it was otherwise. There it was not stucco, or stone, or any kindly work of mason or bricklayer, but the dreadful product of the furnace and the fire. The Gates of Hell and the colonnaded boundary wall that shut in that soul-shaking enceinte were all of shining yellow brass and towered far above their earthly prototype, if prototype it were.

On the outline waved and flickered a pale-blue sulphurous flame. Its light tongues licked the tops of the columns, the convolutions of the stairs, the endless levels of the architrave, and the bases of the columns. It was as if some cunning artist in illumination had picked out all the salient points with his quivering lamps. But all that was nothing to what I must call, for want of better and juster words, the aerial background of the Gates. As I looked I knew what Virgil and Milton meant when they wrote of gates, though gates so different: *With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms*. Through the bars of the Gates, all along the top of the walls, at all the minor openings I saw, and felt where I could not see,

these awful faces—a suffusion of white, wan visages, fierce, threatening, ominous. They were everywhere watching me with their wicked eyes, and yet I could never hold or catch their glance. They looked over me, under me, above me, beyond me, through me, and beside me, but never at me.

Outside the Gates of Hell surged a crowd so vast, so tempestuous, so unruly, so disarrayed that I know not how to describe it. Nothing that I have ever read of beaten armies, of despairing and hunger-stricken mobs, of men maddened by the thoughts of plunder and revenge, will help me to paint that surging ocean of the damned. Its most significant and awful feature was its tireless vacillation. That was constant and essential. It took new phases every moment, like the slimy, frothy, changeful stuff in some sorceress's shameful cauldron. Here bubbled up shapeless abortions from the bottom. There sank from the top things terrible and things obscene. But always vacillation was the dominant. Fear was uppermost, and fear was the begetter of the wavering and despair.

Like some monstrous jelly quaked and quivered the throng, or shivered and grew still for an instant of unstable equilibrium more atrocious even than the wild lap and surge, and the eddying rushes that succeeded it. And all the time there was clear, ringing laughter in the air—not from the crowd outside, for they were speechless, but from inside the Gates. It was 'Laughter heard off.' The most dreadful thing about this laughing was not that it was almost silvery in tone, but that it was drilled, regular, controlled—made to order. It was the laugh of an infernal *claque*—of people ordered to laugh, and of people who knew and did their horrible business perfectly. May I never hear that rippling,

shimmering sound again ! It must come from the place from which come the smiles, the gestures, the voices, and the beckonings of the mad. The dreadful faces seemed as nothing to that far-away, limpid, yet cheerless laughter floating up from the deepest depths of the Pit, far, far down, beyond even the reach of thought.

The crowd surged and shivered, sweated and splashed round the Gates, and the grim guardians were perpetually pulling in batches of the men and women who had been thrown up by that sea of sorrow, or rather of despair, for sorrow has something in it of dignity and gentleness. Here was no dignity, but all was savagery and implacable discouragement.

Yet not quite all. As I watched more narrowly—it was the privilege of that dreadful place that all one's faculties were turned to an inhuman pitch of sensitiveness—I saw standing close *outside* the gates, yet not of the armies of the lost, some of those whom Bunyan calls 'Shining Ones.' These Shining Ones scanned the men and women before them keenly and not unkindly, and every now and again they would seem to recognize and then single out an individual.

These they took gently aside, and led them to where I saw a little archway hardly four feet high in a great wall capped by a cloud, and, what was strange, inside the arch were steps that seemed to go upwards, not down. But it was a winding staircase, and those who trod it after they had bowed their heads and bent their knees to enter were soon lost to view. And I noticed that those whom the Shining Ones touched by the shoulder and led by the hand to the little low archway seemed at once to lose the strange, rigid contraction but an instant before that had belonged to them, as to all that throng. They grew

suddenly relaxed. With tears and low lamentations and tremors of the limbs, they leant on the Shining Ones as if they felt once more the pains of dissolution. Yet a moment before they had seemed things of steel or granite.

Often they were of a prouder and more self-possessed bearing than the rest, and did not share the vacillation of the crowd, but marched even to the Gates of Hell itself with head erect and a brave, confident air. I saw one especially who bore himself like some gallant soldier almost without fear, or, at any rate, with fear nobly repressed. His arm enfolded a woman. But her face was knotted with horror and dread, and again and again she buried her teeth in his shoulder in her selfish and shameless agony. He, however, looked down on her with something that even in the blue glare seemed like mercy and loving-kindness. I could even—greatest miracle of all in such a place!—hear him speak. ‘I’ll stand by you whatever happens. I’ll go with you to Hell itself. They can’t separate us. I’ll make it impossible. We’ll face it together whatever it is.’ But she did not listen or regard him, but only struggled to get free, and frowned and spat on him in her dumb fury.

When the Shining One touched the man’s shoulder, he whom I had thought so haughty and so hard fluttered and grew quiet like a captured bird. The splendid taut thews and sinews gave way. The fierce blue eyes softened and shone like those of a girl. His arms fell to his sides, and the woman sprang away from him, shaking him off with malice and rage. Spurning him with her foot, she ran hither and thither in her fierce panic. For him that touch of the Shining One’s finger had been the wave of Lethe. He had already forgotten everything—even

her for whom he had marched to the Infernal Portals and dared the powers of Hell to keep him out. Very gently they led him to the little archway, set his feet upon the stair, and I saw him no more.

Then I turned to one who stood near me, and whom I knew for a guide to those who wander in their dreams to places strange and fearful, and asked him the meaning of what I had seen, and he answered : *There is a way to Heaven, even from the Gates of Hell, as well as from the City of Salvation.*

Then I remembered that I must shake myself out of my reverie, and go and find out whether the Surgeons had finished. And then I heard their feet in the passage, and in a moment I knew that all had gone well. I had gone through the way to Heaven, though I had been waiting at the other Gate.

#### VOLTAIRE ON THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

13th May 1923.—As a pendant to the waking dream I described yesterday I may take another into which my thoughts were cast at a moment of great national crisis, and when the whole British people were suffering from an intense reaction of perplexity.

The way in which the Government's amazing method of putting forth the news of the Battle of Jutland reacted on me was certainly original. For my day-dream I had to go to the Elysian Fields and borrow the pen of Voltaire. A day-dreaming spirit is nothing if not adventurous and self-confident. He would bandy compliments with all the Gods in the Pantheon if the mood were on him. At any rate I felt that if in the Elysian Fields they are moved at all by mortal things, we might be sure that Voltaire watched with eagle eyes *Le Roi des Bulgares* trying to Prussianize the world. We may be sure, also, I



argued with myself, that Voltaire, if he writes as well as watches, is full of sympathetic reflections on the English, for he loved our nation; and if he did not build us a synagogue, he at any rate raised to us an eternal monument in his letters on England—*Anglis erexit Voltaire*. He could not keep his pen off the people who always amused him so immensely, and yet touched his fierce, hard, mocking spirit as children touch men who are too cynical and saturnine to show human feeling to ‘grown-ups.’ Such persons may see men or women lying wounded in a ditch and pass by on the other side, but cannot for an instant resist the appeal of the child. My next step was to assume that if Voltaire had been watching and writing of England, he must have been delighted beyond all measure by the way in which we took the greatest naval battle in our history, and made it a subject, not for flags, toasts, and triumphs, but for indulgence in a perfect orgy of spleen, self-depreciation, abuse of ourselves and our rulers, and for a general display of melancholic gloom of the most approved East Wind kind. (My readers will remember Voltaire’s deliciously whimsical attribution of English mental eccentricities to the inability of the race to endure cold, dry winds.) The weather and the occasion, Voltaire was sure to have explained to his colleagues, all contributed to afford the English people an opportunity of showing off their national characteristics to the full. I soon imagined him gravely thanking the Kaiser for having proved so perfect a circus-master. ‘Before the eyes of a delighted Europe he has been putting the lion through his paces—including, of course, the final bolt for the cage-door, with the lion’s teeth in the black and yellow coat-tails as they whisk through the aperture into safety.’ Then I began to go off properly. I saw that a new Voltaire

letter on England had been laid on my desk. I took it up and found it read as follows :

‘DEAR —,—The English are a great people, a brave people, and a people who, in spite of their phlegm, and of all appearances to the contrary, are at heart optimists. No doubt they conceal the fact with a cloak which a fool or an enemy would declare to be made of hypocrisy, but in truth it is nothing of the kind. If you could have seen them during the last two days and watched how they received the news of the great sea battle lately fought in the North Sea, you would have been exasperated at first, but later I am sure you would have learnt, like me, not only to love but to understand them. Any other people would have perceived at once that their Fleet had won a victory. It had stopped the enemy doing what he wanted to do, whatever that was—and who can say what Potsdam may not want when once its lusts are stirred ? It had driven him off the sea and back into his ports, and further it was left to sail the battlefield in proud possession.

“What more can heart desire ?” would have been the cry in Paris or Madrid. Not so with the English. They only perceived a magnificent opportunity to show the world what the spleen can do at its height. Though they had the facts which I have just given staring them in the face, there was not a bright eye or a happy countenance in the country. Every man, woman, and child was plunged in melancholy, and melancholy of a very angry kind. They were determined to enjoy to the full what one of their poets has called “the luxury of woe,” and, but for their essential goodness of heart, I should have added, of arrogant ill-temper. They were “of all men most miserable.” (You must always pardon these islanders a quotation from Peter or Paul. They know their Bibles far too well, and quote on every possible and impossible occasion !) They were disgraced, they were ruined, they had lost the command of the sea—how, they did not explain, and at the moment it was

positively not safe to ask them. To have done so would have been to win a drubbing from people who the next moment were declaring that all spirit, courage, steadfastness, and what not had utterly and for ever abandoned the English race. For the future any man might slap their faces or kick their hinder parts without the slightest trepidation. It was all over. They could never recover from the humiliation and despair of this black Friday.

'You will say, perhaps, that all this melancholy was really the result of the humanity of the English, and of their sorrow at the great loss of life, and even more at the loss of those precious ships which the Englishman loves as other men love animals or old customs. Only the English manage to worship inanimate things, though, of course, they will not allow their "coursers of the brine" to be inanimate. No; that is not the explanation.

'The English know how to suffer losses without blenching. As their greatest General said, "They like a big butcher's bill." It stirs their sluggish spirits to hear of great losses, huge slaughters, and heroic sacrifices. They endure death and wounds easily enough. It was the luxury of self-depreciation, the joy of hitting their own heads hard, which they could not resist when so good an opportunity offered itself. The temptation was increased by the fact that the Lords of the Admiralty, who are also Englishmen and share the national feeling, led off the chorus of adoration of the great goddess of Spleen in a style of special magnificence. We have all heard the expression "Lie like a bulletin." The English will some day vary it to "Weep like a bulletin." So lachrymose was the manner in which *Milords* announced the news of the sea fight that it took even a Frenchman a little time to realize what the document was so zealously concealing. Not merely was its general tone funereal, but there was visible an almost savage attempt to exaggerate the English losses and conceal those of the enemy.

‘The English took the cue instantly and joyfully, and wept and would not be comforted. Yet I honestly believe that all the time those amazing islanders were cherishing in their secret hearts the knowledge that things were really quite satisfactory, and that after a good howl they would enjoy all the more the delights of victory. I have heard that one of their youthful poets now on this side Lethe and the Styx was in the habit of putting the strongest cayenne pepper down his throat and enduring temporary torture, in order that later he might the more enjoy the coolness of his claret, as they all call Bordeaux in London—and, by the way, there is none better than that stored in the cellars of England. They tend it as if it were a rare plant.

‘Well, this, I am sure, is what the English people were doing last week. As I write they are beginning to acknowledge how delicious cool claret tastes to a burnt throat. Finally, they will return to sobriety and sound business, and will reckon up their gains in the true counting-house style. “What a people!” you will say. “They are impossible! Frenzied and incomprehensible barbarians!” Perhaps. And yet, somehow, delightful barbarians with a true worship for intellect, science, and even, incredible as it may sound, art.

‘Their loyalty, if not their discrimination, is amazing. In truth, if I may whisper it in your ear, of discrimination and discretion they have none. Of literary and artistic valour, however, there is plenty. If they think you are a genius, they will go through fire and water to save and serve you, and never even ask to see your certificates. It is sufficient if you yourself swear that you are the authentic son of Apollo. They do not know why they cherish genius. It is enough if the mystic label is there. I admit that they cannot understand genius as we understand it, but at any rate they adore it. Do you wonder, then, that I pardon all their gloomy, and even graceless, follies and eccentricities, their crudities and aberrations?

tions? I claim for them the right to indulge their spleen to any extent they may desire. As long as they recognize the heroes of the mind and will die to protect them, what man of letters or of genius can be so base as to deny his bravest bodyguard?

'Truly the English have never delighted and amused me more than within the past few days. They are a noble people, and I hug myself and them for their delicious inconsequence. It is Rabelais and Don Quixote come to life in the plump body of M. Jourdain, and yet with it all the stern trumpet of Mars fires the heart. If you want to go into battle, have an Englishman at your right hand—yes, and another at your left, and, I may add, two immediately in front and two close behind. There is something in the English which seems to guarantee security. Never forget that, even when you are most irritated by the antics of these engaging madmen.

'With profound respect and in the best of tempers,

'Believe me, dear Sir, to be

'Your devoted friend and admirer

'VOLTAIRE.'

## SAINTLY DEVILS AND DEVILISH SAINTS

14th May 1923.—I have been seeing during the last two days a good deal of S. H. and N. P. There could not be a greater contrast. S. H. is a saint with a touch of the devil—a quite attractive combination. One can never accuse him of being priggish, or humble, or mawkishly good, for the tartness of the diabolic strain is always coming out and making him speak with stimulating asperity. With this strong anti-septic there is no danger of his milk of human kindness, which is, all the same, his great quality, turning sour. What a contrast is afforded by N. P.:—he is the devil with a touch of the saint, rather like Silia in Pope. He has the gentlest and most charming manner, and

you feel it would pain him to hurt a fly far more than it would hurt the insect. He will take infinite trouble to do you small services, and throughout his life he has never said anything disagreeable to anybody, and an immense number of pleasant things to people who did not particularly deserve an honorarium. He would far rather please you than not please you, and is always laying little schemes for doing unnecessary kindnesses, if there can be such things as unnecessary kindnesses ! The kindnesses I mean in this case are kindnesses which he is under no obligation to do, which are purely gratuitous, and which in a sense are not the least deserved. N. P. carries benevolence about with him in a bottle, and is not merely proud of it, but uses it as a means of making himself comfortable and happy. Any one who has read Lord Halifax's inimitable picture of Charles II. and his analysis of the King's good humour will readily understand what I mean. The base of N. P.'s charm and kindness, and sunniness of temper, and good humour, is a supreme egotism, supremely organized. Not only can he not bear a scene, but he cannot bear to see anybody unhappy. A craving face, or even an anxious face, or an unsatisfied face, is a non-conductor of the unbroken sense of happiness, which is his ideal. Yet all the time one feels that underneath there is a very large proportion of devil, and a calculating devil who has worked out the exact amount of sacrifice which it is worth while for A to make in order to ensure happiness in B, and so prevent B's unhappiness possibly endangering his, A's, own. In a word, he takes enormous care to prevent B's house catching fire, not out of real affection for B, but because he thinks the fire might spread to his own house—awful thought ! And yet such an adept is A in the management of life that he makes B feel that he is a naturally

benevolent person, and, indeed, ends by persuading himself that he is. For all practical purposes he becomes—or, at any rate, seems to become—one of the best men in the world.

I have thought out a test to apply to these natures in order to prove which is made of the true gold. I put it this way to myself. I should very much prefer to be stormbound in a country inn for three or four days with N. P. For fear of the position becoming strained and disagreeable he would lay himself out to make everything pleasant and delightful, and to smooth life for both of us. But if I had to live for a month on a desert island, with Death hunting us up and down the shore and through the forest, I should infinitely prefer S. H. As things got worse and worse, he would get nicer and nicer, more good-tempered and more helpful. In the inn S. H. would probably have taken the opportunity to tell me for my good all my failings and would look like thunder during the process. N. P., on the other hand, would talk as if I was a perfect character, and dwell so artfully on all my good qualities that at the time I should feel myself to be the best and noblest of mankind.

But though S. H. might make himself disagreeably virtuous at the inn, on the island he would not preach a single sermon. He would be cheerful and lovable beyond words, and show ‘the sunshine of the breast,’ of which Gray speaks—not the brilliant electric light which N. P. uses as a substitute. When the last morsel of food was gone, which I fear would not have been fairly shared, and we settled down to die, I should know as my eyes closed for the last time that on the other side he would take my hand as naturally as if I were going lame in a big crowd and lead me through the door of Heaven. While the angels saluted, St. Peter would bow and declare in his softest

and clearest tones that 'the friend who is with you, S. H., will be welcome without examination or testimonials of any kind.' S. H. would be amazed, though not I, at the whole incident. He would try to make out that there was some mistake, something wrong, and would insist that this sort of reception could obviously not be meant for him. However, the angelic guide would gently push us in explaining: 'You did not realize, then, that you have had the *grande entrée* accorded to you for years and years? However, it is very often like that with people like you, and in any case it makes no difference. The trouble is that there are such millions of people who are certain that they have got the *grande entrée*, or, at any rate, the ordinary *entrée*, when, as a matter of fact, they have been marked C 3, or even queried D 1. It is most disagreeable work explaining the matter to them, poor dears, and in their disappointment they often become quite cross, and so get some rough talk. St. Peter, you know, is still a little inclined to be hasty in speech.'

### WHAT IS TRUTH?

15th May 1923.—*Another Day-Dream*. There are, of course, plenty of ways of escaping so crude an interrogatory. I might express my disgust at this attempt, à la Pilate, to cry 'Hands up!' to the Diarist. . . .

Again, I might urge with scornful Mme. du Deffand that he who defines is insufferable—a social and intellectual leper. If I remember rightly, the last brick that amazing lady threw at her immortal 'lady companion's' head was: '*Elle définit!*' All the same, there is a good deal of attraction in a voyage of discovery after Truth. One's adventures would be



like those of the Prince in the story who was always trying to find the land at the back of the North Wind. He was always being told that, if he went to the nearest witch, she would be delighted to direct him.

That view of the quest led me not long ago to a day-dream. I envisaged my Prince, being a natural and simple soul, going first to the Lady Logic and asking her what Truth was. The grey-faced Goddess told him that she could only inform him *conditionally*.

‘ If you will allow me two “ ifs ” or sometimes possibly only one “ if,” I can tell you exactly what the Truth is about anything and everything—tell you to a hair’s-breadth and with absolute certainty. But I must have my “ if.” ’

And then she babbled on with her conditional syllogism. ‘ *If* all men are mortal and *if* the Prince is a man, then the Prince must die. That is Truth eternal, Truth adamantine, the Truth that nothing can alter. But who am I that I should tell you for certain that all men are mortal, or that you, delightful Prince, are a man ? How can I tell ? I have not seen all men but only some men, and it is possible, though not likely, that in the future an immortal man may be born. In matters so important I cannot trifle with likelihoods. I *must* have my “ if.” If you expect more, you expect too much.’

No wonder the Prince was politely but somewhat disdainfully angry. He had always thought Logic a very different person, some one who gave out dead certainties, not ‘ ifs,’ not a mere harmless and necessary little creature who merely did odd jobs about the House of Thought, but an inspiring Goddess ; and he told her so. Lady Logic, thus put on her mettle, answered that, even if she was small and humble in appearance, she was really great, or, at any rate, as great as anything in this wide sad world.

‘ Even if I am a very small thing, I am the only thing, the only instrument in the realms of Thought, the only process, the only method of reasoning, the only step by which the mind can rise to higher things. *It is me or nothing.* Despise me if you will, but you cannot advance an inch in the realms of Thought without me. I am in those realms what the atom or the electron is in the realm of Matter—the ultimate thing, the *sine qua non*, the last and least, but always the last. If you press on to the end, all else will fall away and desert you. Then you will discover that man stands alone in the universe with nothing but movement, *ῥεῖ τὰ πάντα*, the eternal flux ; something to move or to move in ; and me—the syllogism. Then call me a foot-rule if you dare.’

Did the Prince have no answer ? Did he leave the lady with the last word ? No ! Like a true man, he defied her, though at heart he feared her ; or rather, feared she might be right.

‘ Logic, you are growing arrogant. You have forgotten something—something which differs from you because it is not dead but alive, something which can put in motion both you and the electron, something which can create, and so partakes of God—Consciousness. Consciousness is a fact, not a cramping hypothesis, supported by a couple of phantasmal “ ifs.” It is the unmistakable, the undeniable thing, the simple mystery. You and your electron are but shadows. Here is the one great reality, the thing essential, the *causa causans*. The rest is silence and the shadow of a name. I do not ask whether I am conscious—whether I can think. I know that I can. I am an I,—because I think. In my consciousness I find a conclusion that needs no premises.’

And now the vision grows clearer. I see the Prince going on with his quest, and being boxed about from

one goddess, ghost, or spirit to another, till at last he finds himself in front of the veil that no man can draw, and hears, or sees (or thinks he heard or saw) something moving behind it. Worn with years and spent with searching, he puts his question in an agony of doubt, lest he should find that, after all, there is no such thing as Truth, and that he has been playing with a word. And then a voice comes from behind the veil—a voice low, clear, deep and yet vibrant, which tells him that he may be content with his ignorance. Why should he be so disturbed not to know what the Truth is when he is in the same ignorance of all the other great and essential things of which he is conscious ?

‘ Do you know what Life is, or what Death is, or what Time is, or what Space is ? You cannot tell what Movement is, or if there is indeed such a thing. You cannot define matter, much less consciousness. You cannot even tell what Love is. And yet you deal with all these things and do not despair. Why, then, should you quail and shudder because Truth will no more give you up her secret than will these other mysteries ? It is just because I, Truth, am great and eternal, and a reality, that I cannot tell you what I am. Yet you may live for me, thirst for me, fight for me, die for me, be inspired by me, and believe in me as much as you believe in the unprovables Life and Death. Does the soldier ask to stop the battle in order that he may be told exactly why Zero was half-past four and not some other time ? Are you going to be less brave and less confident than he ? ’

And so the Prince at the end of his quest went back content, if not enlightened ; able, if not to answer the question, ‘ What is Truth ? ’, at least to say : ‘ I know when you do not ask me.’ Quieted by an ignorance so august and so inspiring, he awaited the appointed hour.

## THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES

16th May 1923.—I have made a discovery. The Kaiser, in his vulgar arrogance, could not contrive even verbal originality. That treasure-house of gay and gallant mysticism, the *Religio Medici*, anticipates him by some two hundred and fifty years.

*‘This makes me naturally love a soldier and honour those ragged and contemptible regiments that will die at the command of a Sargeant.’*

Thus did Browne ‘prediscover’ the men of Mons. It may be remembered in this context that the noble physician was as much moved by the Navy as by the Army. Is there not extant a delightful letter to his son who became a sailor, reminding him that, when he first determined to go to sea, he (Sir Thomas) insisted on his studying all the naval battles in Plutarch? He was evidently determined that the classics should be useful as well as ornamental.

## THE GODDESS OF TRUTH

17th May 1923.—Apropos of my entry of 15th May 1923 and the River of Life, whence come these words?

‘Even to such an one as I am, an idiota or common person, no great things, melancholising in woods and quiet places by rivers, the Goddess herself, Truth, has oftentimes appeared.’

I presume this must be by Burton, and in the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. But though Burton’s *Anatomy* is supposed to be the only book that Dr. Johnson ever read twice (unless that distinction belongs to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s Letters), and the only

book that got him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise, I cannot undertake to go through Burton in order to find the passage. There is no concordance, though if one were made it would prove the maddest, merriest piece of pregnant pedantry in the world of letters.

## LANGUAGE AND ITS WEAKNESS

18th May 1923.—The worst part of writing a Diary is that you begin to ask yourself what you really mean by the words you employ. Language is in truth the devil. It is always in danger of expressing too much, or too little, or something different from what you mean. Worst of all, what it means to you is not what it means to A, or to B, or to C. It is often, indeed, exactly the opposite of what it professes to be—a medium of communication. It is no wonder, therefore, that the philosophers who want to convey an exact meaning rage at language. The final paragraphs of Mr. Bertrand Russell's most interesting book, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, end with a well-merited arraignment of language for its inefficiency, and tell us what an impossible medium it is for conveying logical or mathematical truth :—

‘It is impossible to convey adequately the ideas that are concerned in the subject so long as we abstain from the use of logical symbols. Since ordinary language has no words that naturally express exactly what we wish to express, it is necessary, so long as we adhere to ordinary language, to strain words into unusual meanings; and the reader is sure, after a time if not at first, to lapse into attaching the usual meanings to words, thus arriving at wrong notions as to what is intended to be said. Moreover, ordinary grammar and syntax is extraordinarily misleading.

This is the case, for example, as regards numbers : " ten men " is grammatically the same form as " white men," so that " ten " might be thought to be an adjective qualifying " men." It is the case, again, wherever propositional functions are involved, and in particular as regards existence and descriptions. Because language is misleading, as well as because it is diffuse and inexact when applied to logic (for which it was never intended), logical symbolism is absolutely necessary to any exact or thorough treatment of our subject.'

I am sure Mr. Russell is right, though I am too old and lazy and intellectually unreformed to learn the use of symbols.

In this context, and as illustrating the uselessness of language, I should like to put side by side with Mr. Russell's words a wonderful analysis of the meaning of music, and of what one might call the superiority, because of its universality, of music as a medium. It is to be found in a letter of Mendelssohn's to Marc-André Souchay, written in October 1842. The artist, it will be seen, is as impatient of language as is the philosopher :

' There is so much talk about music and so little really said. My belief is, in fact, that words are insufficient for the purpose, and if I ever found they were sufficient, I should ultimately never write any more music. People generally complain that music is capable of so many interpretations ; they are so uncertain what they ought to understand by it, whereas everybody would understand words. To me it is just the other way. And it is not merely whole sentences, but single words too that seem to me capable of so many interpretations, so indefinite, so unintelligible in comparison with real good music, which fills one's soul with a thousand better things than words. Music that I love expresses to me

thought, not too indefinite, but too *definite*, to put into words. And so I find that in all attempts to translate these thoughts (into words) there is something legitimate, but in all of them something unsatisfactory, and that is what I feel about your attempts. This, however, is not your fault, but the fault of the words, which cannot help themselves. If you ask me what I had in my mind, I can only say : "Just the song as it stands." And if I did in one case or another have a definite word or words in my mind, still I would rather not tell anybody what they were, because a word does not mean the same to any one person as it does to another, because only the song itself can say the same thing to one person as to another.'

Whether this side of music will ever be developed, and we shall find the man of thought of the future putting the *Principia Mathematica* into Sonatas, or giving an absolute, general, and convincing proof of some new proposition in a fugue, remains to be seen. Given the truth of Mendelssohn's generalizations, it ought not to be impossible. The idea would certainly have delighted the Greeks, who were always feeling after the connection between pure science and the arts. After all, did not Pythagoras, when he had discovered the forty-seventh proposition, sacrifice his oxen to the Muses and not to Pallas Athene? Renan of course had a similar idea. Here is his prophecy that the philosophy of the future would have to be dramatically or indeed operatically expressed. I would go further and say you might use the ballet and dance as an interpretation of time and space. At any rate, here is Renan's view :

' Dialogue is to me the only form which in the present stage of human thought is suitable for the setting forth of philosophical ideas. These kind of

truths can neither be directly denied nor directly affirmed,—neither could they properly be the objects for demonstration. All one can do is to present them in all their divers facets, to show strength, weakness, necessity, equivalents. All the higher problems of humanity are in this position. Who would attempt nowadays to give a systematic explanation of political science? The great moral and social questions end in interim conclusions, all agreeable but all incompatible with each other. Political economy is nothing but an eternal debate between two systems, of which neither will ever supplant the other nor convince it of its fundamental error.

‘It all hinges on the fundamental difference between belief and knowledge, conjecture and certainty. Dialogues are not made about geometry because geometry is an impersonal truth. But all that implies a science of faith, of conscious adherence of choice, antipathy, sympathy, hate and love, is well set forth by a mode of exposition in which each opinion is incarnated in a human personality who believes as a mortal being. These reasons led me one day to choose the dialogue form to explain certain sequences of ideas. Then I found that dialogue alone was not enough—that action was essential, that dramas which express freely, though without local colour in the Shakespearian manner, brought out shades of meaning in a much subtler way. Actual history, which has taken place, is not the only kind that is interesting; for by the side of it runs the history of the spirit, which in the material sense has never existed, but which in a spiritual sense has had a thousand lives. Coriolanus and Julius Caesar are not pictures of Roman customs; they are studies in an eternal psychology.

‘I have tried without any elaborate staging to do something analogous to this. The drama is the best of literary forms. Imaginative work is only complete if the author can show the creatures of his fancy in concerted action, living, speaking, acting. Philo-



sophy, at the point of subtlety at which it has now arrived, marvellously accommodates itself to a mode of exposition where there is no dogmatism and where everything melts, opposes, blends. One doesn't attempt to follow strictly the rules of formal logic, rather to strengthen the proofs of the existence of God and the soul's immortality.

'Men realize at this moment that they never can know anything of the supreme cause of the universe, or their own destiny. And yet they want to have it put before them. Dramatic action is worth more in bringing out doubts, half-lights, audacities, followed by recoils, flights of fancy, than only abstract discussion. The author of the book of Job understood this seven hundred or eight hundred years before Christ. The last word in modern philosophy will be in a drama, or rather an opera—for music and the illusions of the lyric stage would be an admirable help to thought, from the point where words fail to express it. So it is possible thus to conceive an aristocratic state when intelligent people should form the public of a philosophic theatre which should be one of the most powerful mediums of ideas and the most effective exponent of the highest culture. Obviously such a theatre would have nothing in common with the ordinary stage as exemplified by a music hall, where foreigners, provincials, and bourgeois are only trying to spend an agreeable evening. It would never do for this honest diversion to disappear, but there should be something more. In books, side by side with the volumes destined for the public library, there is the volume whose success lies in its appreciation by several hundred connoisseurs. But in the drama the equivalent of the aristocratic book does not exist. The necessity of attracting each evening twelve or fifteen hundred people, who must be amused, has created for the theatre a similar situation to that which would have happened to literature, if it had not been possible to publish any books which would not be certain of ten thousand readers.

‘ One of the richest of the arts is thus forbidden to the higher Thought. Victor Hugo was always on the razor-edge in this matter. He realized the superiority of the drama, its incomparable strength, and his genius refused to submit to its mean expedients. His corsets hampered him to the point that he finished by rejecting them altogether. Hence his *Théâtre en liberté*.

‘ My dear master and friend, Baron Eckstein, once wrote a play which began before the world was in being by a conversation in the bosom of the Trinity. In the regrettable absence of this dialogue, which would assuredly be the most delightful to hear (the world being the result of internal dialogue between the Father and the Son), I have tried to make some suggestions for a few fancies, which each reader can continue when he chances to be sleepless. The picture of human life is only complete if there is a place for comedy beside tears, for pity beside anger, and for laughter beside reverence.’

### RACINE

19th May 1923.—A day in bed with a bad cold, most sordid, squalid, base and brutal of minor maladies, has subdued my spirit to a mood in which Racine’s *Phèdre* seemed appropriate. But in truth the cold was only an excuse. I can make almost anything an excuse to read Racine, and my little bedroom copy of the Plays opens naturally at *Phèdre*. A great play, a great poet, and in the best sense a great *tour de force*. It is a miracle of art, a triumph over a world of obstacles! Racine begins by taking a view of his story at once arid and preposterous. He has no instinctive sympathy with the Greek spirit and does not understand its origin or impulses in the least. He sees his Hellenic heroes in periwigs and

shorts. They are Parisians of the *Grande Monarchie*. There is no suggestion of an Athenian atmosphere.

We may be told that the scene passes at a town in the Peloponnese, but we know quite well that it passes at Versailles. One catches oneself, indeed, wondering whether St. Simon does not hint at some super-scandal of the Court, of which this is a reflection dressed *en Grec*.

But though Racine has loaded himself with such a monstrous burden of disabilities, they fall off him the instant he really gets to work. Like the oak in the song in Thomson's *Alfred*, the thunderbolts of ridicule only root his verses deeper and stronger in our hearts. We may come to scoff, but we remain to admire the perfection of an inestimable art.

The Poet is so sure of himself that he never dreams of telling us that, if we have tears, we must be prepared to shed them now. That is by no means his method. He glories in taking us into the enchanted palace, not merely by the back-door, but by a sort of squalid basement entrance which he has had fitted up for the express purpose of cooling us down, and making us admit that there is no illusion, no artifice, and that we cannot ever say that he has tricked us of a tear. If we tremble and weep, it is because we are confronted with a most compelling sense of woe, of the blindness of destiny, and of the sadness and horror of human life.

Therefore he begins his awful tragedy, his tale of terror and dismay, tempest and eclipse, like this :

‘*Hippolyte*. Le dessein est pris ; je pars, cher Thérémène,  
Et quitte le séjour de l’aimable Trézène.’

As the immortal Mr. Babbitt would say, ‘Beat it!’ For pure imbecile pomposity and intellectual squalor it is unapproachable. ‘*Aimable Trézène!*’ Great

Heavens ! Why, the place is a moral pest-house, the very home of Crime and Frenzy, Vice and Murder. Death and Depravity riot and revel in this *Petite Ville du Péloponèse*.

Yet the poet is so certain that the next minute he will have us by the throat that he disdains to freeze our blood prematurely. And so it's 'Tiddlewinks-the-Barber,' and 'aimable Trézène,' and 'old man Theseus,' and 'une tête si chère,' and the rest of it, for some twenty lines of tepid convention. And then, before we know what has happened, we have drifted from our snug little canalized back-water into a deep and dreadful river, flecked with cruel foam and oily with strangling eddies. The sound of the rapids is in our ears. A Hell of waters is calling for our blood as well as for that of the men and women whose fate we are watching. And along the darkened banks range wild presences,—repellent, formless, obscure, wandering lights and thronging faces, which, though seen but for a moment, will be swept into our dreams for ever. The hoarse cries of souls in torment and despair affright our senses, and over all is the shadow of inexorable Fate.

Racine seems to be deliberately adopting the device of the modern conjurer or juggler. In old days the adept wore long robes and sleeves if he was to do sleight-of-hand tricks, and eel-like fittings if he was to perform feats of strength. Now a man got up to look as much as possible like a waiter at a restaurant strolls on to the platform. He shows you that his dress coat is exactly like yours. He smokes a cigarette, and seems as he walks, clumsy and shy and impossible—a complete amateur. Yet out of his pockets come rabbits, and goldfish, and top-hats, and eight-day clocks enough to fit up a shop. Or else in his tight trousers and stiff white waistcoat, starched

shirt and collar, he tumbles and jumps, and lets half a dozen people stand on his head and shoulders. While they self-consciously drink 'pretend' beer, he takes up a chair in his teeth or balances a huge pole on his chin as a side-show. So Racine in his full-bottomed wig. We look on him as a pure 'scream' till he begins, and then—'Who dares laugh now, Mr. Speaker?'

It is curious, and rather disconcerting at first, but could there be a better proof of greatness? Racine is not really telling us about Theseus and Monsieur Hippolyte and the agreeable 'daughter of Minos and Pasiphae,' but about the essentials of human nature, and of how, in spite of man's unconquerable mind, our Fate is waiting for us in the dark.

But though I pay—and who can do otherwise?—the fullest and most sincere homage to Racine, and put him next after Shakespeare in the power to alarm the soul and beat up the lazy and disordered camp of the emotions, I still every now and then see the Louis Quatorze wigs and the high-heeled shoes with big black bows on them sticking through the dialogue and the tirades. But this does not interfere the least either with my awe or with my boundless enjoyment of the play and the adorable music of the verse.

Racine can afford to let us laugh at his frigidity and blind spots. He is too noble an artist to plaster them with bits of bogus ornament. He is not in the very least ashamed to be dull and formal when he considers that his scene demands these qualities. He rises to any and every occasion, but he will not pretend to do so when there is no cause of exaltation. And so one gets a double pleasure. I weep with him, sigh, tremble, and grow pale, when he means me to do so; but I laugh *at him* when his gleaming eye is off me. For example, when Phèdre

makes her confession to Oenone, how irresistibly comic is the explanation, '*O déplorable race!*' It exactly expresses the plain man's view, as does also the prim and appropriate comment, '*Quelles sauvages mœurs!*' And yet how soon it is followed by the exquisite lines in which Hippolytus tells Aricie how his love had grown, and how in vain he had striven to fly and to forget the beloved :

' Dans les fonds des forêts votre image me suit,  
La lumière du jour, les ombres de la nuit.  
Tout retrace à mes yeux les charmes que j'évite,  
Tout vous livre à l'envi le rebelle Hippolyte.'

' Through the deep woods your image haunts my flight.  
In the sun's blaze and in the shades of night  
I see the beauties that I dare not meet.  
Nature abhors the rebel Hippolyte.'

### RACINE, RACINE, AND AGAIN RACINE

20th May 1923.—Racine was apparently serenely unconscious that an author who deals in wide generalities requires to exercise a good deal of art lest he should trip himself up. He must be his own censor. If not, like the lady in Congreve, he will become the thing that he despises. Racine, however, flounders in and never notices. *Phèdre* affords an example.

The critical, or even the uncritical reader, when he gets breath, is apt to complain, and not without cause, that there is a turbid superfluity of adultery and incest in the play. It is no doubt necessary to have these crimes dealt with, as they are the essential theme of the tragedy, but we cannot find them on every page without getting first bored, then annoyed, and finally hysterical at their 'damned iteration.' It is clear,

however, that Racine never imagined that you could overwork this part of the business. He actually puts into the mouth of poor Hippolyte the very protests on this score which are made by the ordinary reader. The fascinating, tender-hearted, and shamefully used *jeune premier* gets the thing on his nerves just as we do. He practically threatens to 'strike,' or goes as near to it as could be expected of so virtuous and much enduring a character. In the first interview the worried and choleric Theseus, a 'heavy father' who outweighs 'twenty Atlantics,' bludgeons his son as follows :

'Va chercher des amis dont l'estime funeste  
Honore l'adultère, applaudisse à l'inceste.'

This is the last straw. The worm turns at last, and, to our intense satisfaction, is for the moment thoroughly 'nasty' :

'Vous me parlez toujours d'inceste et d'adultère ?  
Je me tais. Cependant Phèdre sort d'une mère,  
Phèdre est d'un sang Seigneur, vous le savez trop bien,  
De toutes ces horreurs plus rempli que le mien.'

'And so say all of us !' and 'Thank you for putting it so plainly.' These are the irresistible comments of applause that rise as the passage hits our astonished and much relieved eyes. One has subconsciously wanted somebody to speak out just like that ever since the second scene, and here we are fitted to a nicety. No wonder we feel grateful. That 'Cependant Phèdre' is one of the most human things in high tragedy. It makes amends for oceans of 'hot air.' Poor Hippolyte, poor put-upon, honest lad, always getting it in the neck, and always too much of a gentleman and good son to hit back ; you really have done it this time ! We who read the play already

know that you are going off to have a most uncomfortable interview with the timid and thoroughly unadventurous *jeune fille*, Aricie. We try to think that you admire the way in which she shows off her delicacy of feeling, but no one can pretend she is the kind of hearty, sympathetic, girl-guide sort of young woman you would really like to run off with. The critical reader is indeed far more inclined to pity the hero in this scene than when the wild cat-Phèdre is mauling him, or when Theseus goes for him with the moral crowbar.

If I were to start a convalescent home for the misunderstood heroes of Grand Drama, I should open my house with M. Hippolyte. He never has a dog's chance. And yet he and his pasteboard Aricie have handed to them, so strange are the ways of poets, one of the most exquisite coronals ever woven from the flowers of verse :

‘ Les a-t-on vus souvent se parler, se chercher ?  
 Dans le fond des forêts allaient-ils se cacher ?  
 Hélas ! ils se voyaient avec pleine licence.  
 Le ciel de leurs soupirs approuvait l'innocence ;  
 Ils suivaient sans remords leur penchant amoureux,  
 Tous les jours se levaient clairs et sereins pour eux.’

As an even greater than Racine has said :

‘ Now stand they on the top of happy hours.’

And here I may say in parenthesis that I was once fool enough to think that, because I had made a moderate success in some original lines on an argumentative subject written in the mode of Dryden, I could translate this inimitable passage into English Heroic Couplets. I strove like a wrestling Jacob day and night. But, like him, the longer I strove, the weaker and weaker I seemed to get, while the mighty



Racine grew stronger and stronger. Anyway, I collapsed with only one poor little couplet as the result of all my strivings. I may as well give it here as a warning to those who would attempt a translation of this kind :

‘ Their happy loves shall no remorse condemn,  
Clear and serene each morning dawns for them.’

And so I leave myself hanging in chains by the way-side as a warning to future murderers of poets !

I might give hundreds of examples from *Phèdre* of the oddly prophetic verses which, like so many lines in Lear’s *Nonsense Book*, *Alice in Wonderland*, or *The Snark*, seem applicable to any and every situation. Here is one :

‘ Avec quelle rigueur, destin, tu me poursuis !  
Je ne sais où je vais, je ne sais où je suis.  
O tendresse ! O bonté trop mal récompensée !  
Projet audacieux ! détestable pensée ! ’

But I must leave *Phèdre* for the time, though I will by no means promise not to return to Racine, for I want very much to say a word about the ‘ homecomings ’ in his tragedies.

## RACINE ON HOMECOMINGS

22nd June 1923.—I know nothing, or next to nothing, about Racine’s life, and am too fond of a particular theory, which I have developed, in regard to its influence on his plays to inquire. A hard fact or two might bring my card-castle to instant ruin. Still, I will state my theory, and for two reasons. The first is that, when I last wrote on Racine in this Diary, I promised myself a return to the subject. The other is that I want to see how my theory will look when put on paper. It is that Racine at some

time of his life lived in a seaport town and associated with ships' captains and other sailors. I was led to form my view by the great part played by naval homecomings in his dramas. As depicted by him, they are the most tragically uncomfortable and poignantly painful things in life or literature. Mithridates and Theseus both turn up quite unexpectedly, to the torment, shame, and confusion of their unfortunate families. They were in both cases presumed to be dead, or at any rate sailing perilous and forlorn seas with very faint hopes of ever seeing again 'the well-loved cliffs and happy harbour bar,' etc., etc. And then they suddenly 'blow in' 'at Nymphée, port de mer sur le Bosphore Cimmérien' or at 'L'aimable Trézène,' and fall plump into a horrible cauldron of boiling moral oil. They, poor dears, were filled with such high hopes of renewed happiness, connubial bliss, and domestic joy, 'Home and Beauty,' and the rest. 'How's dear little Ellie?'—'*Not* that big girl in the yellow jumper! My word, she has grown!'—'Ah! there's nothing like home after all!'—'Well, I may have been a bit wild sometimes, and Gay Street in Hong Kong and all that, but sailor men can't be choosers. My heart was always true to Poll.'—'That's the bedrock truth, my dear, and you know it.'—'Nothing like your sweet old face in foreign parts.' 'Saw you every night in my dreams.'—'Why! even when I was on the uninhabited island with that silly black girl I didn't think it worth while to write home about—but there, why rake up an old legend like that?—Let the Past eat its own head off is my motto, and don't worry!'

And all the time everybody from the Head Confidante to the Palace Cat, every one indeed, except the wretched hero, knows perfectly well that all this 'Home, Sweet Home' business is delirious rubbish.

In the case of the King of Pontus (Mithridates) a heated confidante rushes in to declare that the sea harbour is absolutely crawling with ships, and that the King himself has arrived in the port. The said confidante is all for prompt action. She wants to hurry Monime into a black bombazine mourning dress suitable for half-widows, and, when that is done, declares that she must rush down to receive him in the court of the palace. Happily Mithridates insists on beginning his homecoming 'blague' by an excellent account of his military campaigns and the celebrated night attack—an account which enchanted both Frederick the Great and Napoleon. This gives Monime time to put some sort of face on the proceedings, and to dodge the 'breezy' proposal of Theseus that the final marriage ceremony should take place at once, 'as I must be off to-morrow.' But it is not long before Mithridates is enlightened as to the whole home situation, though it takes four acts to get him comfortably killed—but not before he has given a parental blessing or two. Mithridates, in truth, is too busy with the local political situation to be easily disillusioned. He hardly does more at first than think the home atmosphere rather close and disagreeable.

The case of Theseus is far worse. Phèdre, caught in an unsuccessful attempt on the virtue of Hippolyte, immediately denounces him to his father as having attempted to betray her. The result is that the only person who is really glad to see Theseus back, *i.e.* his son, is instantly exiled, and Theseus retires apart to pray to Neptune to destroy his innocent offspring. Minute by minute after his 'martial entry' he gets deeper and deeper in the mire of the 'home situation,' till at last he longs to get back to the road and a life of adventure. The homecoming of the Sultan in

*Bajazet* never comes off, but we see what it would have been like if he had re-entered the seraglio. A dozen more fatal knots would have been tied, to use Racine's rather prim description of the Bow-string in action.

### THE LIFE-URGE

1st July 1923.—I have of late been greatly struck by examples of the almost uncanny way in which the poets anticipate the philosophers, and still more the men of science, in what may be called scientific vaticination. By this I mean passionate reaching out after new ideas—a rapid reconnaissance over ground which will later be made good by the men in the laboratory and the observatory, and by a patient study of the phenomena.

Arthur Hugh Clough affords a memorable example in his juvenile poem, *Natura naturans*—the fascinating elegy concerned with the anonymous young lady in the second-class railway carriage. There, as it seems to me, he is inspired by the idea of Creative Evolution expounded to us seventy years afterwards by Mr. Shaw in his Preface to *Methuselah*. According to Mr. Shaw, what makes the wheels of the world go round is not Darwin's Natural Selection or any paradoxical 'Survival of the fittest'—called fittest because they survive, rather than survivors because they are fittest. It is, instead, the 'Life-Urge'—that mysterious, elemental, august, all-pervasive, circumambient something. It is never seen or discerned directly, though present in all times, in all places, in all men's minds. Yet it never fails to make itself known and prevalent.

Writing before 1849, that is, before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Clough described this

all-enthraling, all-embracing impulse. Blind and dumb it might be, but not purposeless, meaningless, or imbecile. The poem begins by recounting the glow of sympathy, the presage of union, a divine spark between boy and girl. Next he asks whence came the spark, and answers it by an exposition of the Life-Urge. Though he does not use the word, his passion-fused description is exact. The pent-up forces of Creative Evolution are implicit in his verse. The lines vibrate with the Life-Urge. But I had better quote than summarize :

‘ Beside me—in the car—she sat,  
She spake not, no, nor looked to me :  
From her to me, from me to her,  
What passed so subtly, stealthily ?  
As rose to rose that by it blows  
Its interchanged aroma flings ;  
Or wake to sound of one sweet note  
The virtues of departed strings.

‘ Beside me, nought but this ! but this,  
That influent as within me dwelt  
Her life, mine too within her breast,  
Her brain, her every limb she felt :  
We sat ; while o’er and in us, more  
And more, a power unknown prevailed,  
Inhaling, and inhaled—and still  
’Twas one, inhaling or inhaled.

‘ As unsuspecting mere a maid  
As, fresh in maidhood’s bloomiest bloom,  
In casual second-class did e’er  
By casual youth her seat assume ;  
Or vestal, say, of saintliest clay,  
For once by balmiest airs betrayed  
Unto emotions too, too sweet  
To be unlingeringly gainsaid.’

' Unowning then, confusing soon  
 With dreamier dreams that o'er the glass  
 Of shyly ripening woman-sense  
 Reflected, scarce reflected, pass,  
 A wife may-be, a mother she  
 In Hymen's shrine recalls not now,  
 She first in hour, ah, not profane,  
 With me to Hymen learnt to bow.'

The girl may have ignored the Life-Urge. She certainly could not recall it. Yet the sweep and power of that imperious Spring-tide was none the less a fact, and none the less visible to the poet in his hour of ecstasy and insight. The poet can remember and record, as well as feel, what the ordinary man, even when he feels, can only feel and forget. Did the girl know what the elusive thrill of emotion meant to her, to him, and to the world? Here Clough asks and answers questions fraught with a pathos deep and magnificent :

' Ah no !—Yet owned we, fused in one,  
 The Power which e'en in stones and earths  
 By blind elections felt, in forms  
 Organic, breeds to myriad births ;  
 By lichen small on granite wall  
 Approved, its faintest feeblest stir  
 Slow spreading, strengthening long, at last  
 Vibrated full in me and her.

' In me and her—sensation strange !  
 The lily grew to pendent head,  
 To vernal airs the mossy bank  
 Its sheeny primrose spangles spread,  
 In roof o'er roof of shade sun-proof  
 Did cedar strong itself outclimb,  
 And altitude of aloe proud  
 Aspire in floreal crown sublime.

‘ Flashed flickering forth fantastic flies,  
 Big bees their burly bodies swung,  
 Rooks roused with civic din the elms,  
 The lark its wild reveillez rung ;  
 In Libyan dell the light gazelle,  
 The leopard lithe in Indian glade,  
 And dolphin, brightening tropic seas,  
 In us were living, leapt and played.

‘ Their shells did slow crustacea build,  
 Their gilded skins did snakes renew,  
 While mightier spines for loftier kind  
 Their types in amplest limb outgrew ;  
 Yea, close comprest in human breast,  
 What moss, and tree, and livelier thing,  
 What Earth, Sun, Star of force possesst  
 Lay budding, burgeoning forth for spring.’

Though I am no man of science, it seems to me that here the poet is in truth setting forth the very view which Mr. Shaw urges on us with such energy and such mastery of words in the Preface to *Methuselah*. Clough stumbled seventy years ago on the essential truth. Would Mr. Shaw, I wonder, write under it ‘ Approved ’ ? Certainly he must applaud the stanzas as vital poetry. As we read the poem, we feel the ‘ Life-Urge ’ in our very bones. It is the kind of art that, in the words of Emily Brontë :

‘ Has made the ancient torrent moan  
 Although its very source be dry.’

#### A QUOTATION RECOVERED

2nd July 1923.—To-day I received a letter from a gentleman in Blackpool who had read in my *Adventure of Living*, in the chapter on my old nurse, of my attempt to find the origin of one of her favourite quotations. Nobody else of the thousands of people

who, I am proud to say, read the book, many of them very learned in our literature, apparently spotted the author ; but my Blackpool correspondent has. The lines are to be found in an epigram by Mallet, the eighteenth-century poet. The poem begins with an account, I think borrowed from Prior, of the squirrel in the 'rolling cage,' who, while he runs round, thinks he is climbing, and then he goes on :

' So fares it with this little peer,  
 So busy and so bustling here ;  
 For ever flirting up and down,  
 And striking round his cage, the town.  
 A world of nothing in his chat,  
 Of who said this and who did that ?  
 With similes that never hit,  
 Vivacity that has no wit ;  
 Schemes laid this hour, the next forsaken ;  
 Advice oft ask'd, but never taken ;  
 Still whirl'd, by ev'ry rising whim,  
 From that to this, from her to him ;  
 And when he hath his circle run,  
 He ends—just where he first begun.'

That is excellent, though my old nurse, Mrs. Leaker, was quite right in specially remembering and harping upon the lines with which she often used to chasten her charges :

' . . . similes that never hit,  
 Vivacity that has no wit ;  
 Schemes laid this hour, the next forsaken ;  
 Advice oft ask'd, but never taken.'

By the way, it is very curious that Mallet is so much neglected as a poet. It is hardly too much to say that he is quite unknown except by the verbal bomb which Dr. Johnson threw at him. I do not expect it was justified, but it certainly blew the poor



man to pieces. Johnson, it will be remembered, said that Bolingbroke, when he had loaded his atheistical gun, intended to undermine religious faith, he had not the courage to fire it. Therefore he hired a beggarly Scotsman for half a crown to pull the trigger after his death. Mallet considered as a poet is interesting for two reasons. One of his earliest poems is called 'The Excursion.' It is written in blank verse, and it is quite conceivable, and I think indeed likely, that Wordsworth had read it. The other interesting fact about Mallet is that he wrote octosyllabic couplets, the lilt of which reminds one of Scott's narrative poems. Of course, this point must not be pressed too far, especially as most of Mallet's octosyllabics are satirical; but the following quotation from a poem called 'A Fragment' affords justification for what I have said :

'There plung'd amid the shadows brown,  
 Imagination lays him down,  
 Attentive, in his airy mood,  
 To ev'ry murmur of the wood :  
 The bee, in yonder flow'ry nook,  
 The chidings of the headlong brook,  
 The green leaf shiv'ring in the gale,  
 The warbling hill, the lowing vale,  
 The distant woodman's echoing stroke,  
 The thunder of the falling oak :  
 From thought to thought in vision led,  
 He holds high converse with the dead.'

Scott, of course, had ten times more inspiration as well as ten times more vision, as we see from such lines as :

'E'en the light harebell raised its head,  
 Elastic from her airy tread.'

But, all the same, he often is not much above the level of the lines quoted.

## THE GOLDEN TREASURY

4th July 1923.—The *Golden Treasury* holds a position unequalled by any English anthology or book of selections from the British poets. If you are going to travel and feel you must carry your poetry with you lest the desire for verse should sweep over you in a wave, you naturally put it in your box, bag, trunk, suit-case, hold-all, or other receptacle for personal luggage. The first notice I know of this necessary book is to be found in one of the letters of Charles Adams, some time Minister from the United States of America to the Court of St. James. In the early 'sixties, *i.e.* on publication, he sent it to his son, then at the front with his regiment of cavalry. The cavalryman says he laughed when he opened it, for it seemed such an odd book for a camp and the field. 'But, strangely enough, I find that I read it more than any book I have, and that it is more eagerly picked up by my friends. It is very pleasant to lie down in all this dust and heat and to read some charming little thing of Suckling's and Herrick's.'

I wonder how many thousand *Golden Treasuries* went to the trenches in the late war, and this time not merely in the pockets of officers, but in those also of privates. It was my good luck to give a copy to a private, an Old Contemptible, not a public school and university private. This man, by the way, when he came into our hospital, asked to borrow a Pope's Homer, because when at the Dardanelles he had been so close to the site of Troy. He did not, however, become a devotee. He liked it, but, as he said, he did not know the People, so he lost interest, and read other poets. When he went back to France he took the *Golden Treasury* with him, and stuck to it as the

most valuable possession he had till he was taken prisoner in March 1918. Then he had a duplicate copy forwarded to him.

The Adams letters, by the way, are full of good things. One I will record here, for it might well have figured as an example of what Bacon called 'Desperate Sayings.' It is an extract from a letter by Charles Adams, the Diplomat, quoting Jefferson and dealing with the Civil War :

'How full of significance is this history, which all of us are now helping to make ! It is literally the third and fourth generation which is paying the bitter penalty for what must now be admitted were the shortcomings of the original founders of the Union. It was Jefferson who uttered the warning words : "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." Yet even he in his latest years recoiled in equal terror from the opportunity then presented of applying at least a corrective to the fatal tendency of that moment. We have had it all to do at a period when the dangerous evil had reached the plenitude of its power and threatened to expand its sway over all. Practically the task may be said to have been accomplished. But at what a penalty to the generations now alive, and perhaps to their posterity !'

## THE JOURNALIST'S FUNCTION

21st July 1923.—*L'Art ne vit que de passion.* That is true of all arts, and Journalism is an art.

It is not true that, as Millet goes on to say, '*on ne peut pas se passionner de rien.*' To do this very thing is the Journalist's special craft. His business is to become impassioned on everything and so on nothing. You cannot say this is impossible. Why ! Mr. Black, Mr. White, Mr. Grey, and the Editor of the *Dictator* do it every week ! It is their special power.

They, of course, generally write on great themes, but, like the great Journalists they are, they can, if necessary, lead you breathless and flushed with interest through the Elysian Field of Nothing to the cloud-capped towers of the City of Nowhere.

In a word, the best Journalist is the man who can become impassioned on the least provocation. He can make a cocktail out of a wine-glass of muddy water and a peppermint tabloid, and serve it iced in the Sahara.

‘ITALIAM PETIMUS’—‘WE’RE OFF TO ITALY’

*At Sea. 7th August 1923.*—I am on the deck of a Dutch passenger steamer of the Nederland Line off Ushant. My wife and I are on our way to Genoa for an Italian holiday.

We have just passed a steamer. For me she is the merest phantasm, no more real than a ship on a cinema screen. But for our officers and ship’s crew she is as real as ‘old Mr. Jones’s motor going up the road.’ They know in a moment what she is, where she has come from, to what port she is going, and what she is loaded with. It is amazing and, as Sydney Smith said, utterly incomprehensible. You see a smudge on the horizon, and then you hear one of the people on your deck remark pensively, as if he were reading something out of the Stores’ catalogue, ‘The *Royal Edward* out of Bristol with tallow and cork matting. Too high out of the water, like all the boats James and Jumper built till the *Juno* gave ’em a lesson at Singapore.’ When you say with a gulp in your voice, ‘Were the passengers saved?’ he answers airily, ‘I don’t think I ever heard about that, but it caused a lot of talk among the designers.’ When your equanimity is recovered and you go on to say, ‘How

do you manage to know so much about her?’ he simply does not understand what you are driving at, and adds, ‘Oh! you could never miss a ship with a waist like that, could you?’ At that you wildly change the subject to Porpoises, Cuttle-Fish, and Sperm Whales. Truly the sea is a world of its own, and between those who use it and landsmen a great gulf is fixed. They can be quite civil to each other and bow nicely, but no more. There may be hands *across* the sea, but hands between the landsmen and seamen, never. All the same, seafaring men are ‘dears,’ mild and muddle-headed and quite delirious in their notions about ordinary things. But they have vision. Did not the Pilot’s mate of a Phœnician Tramp in Xenophon’s *Economics* make a remark worthy of Captain Cuttle transferred to Paradise? When Xenophon was looking over the great trading ship, he saw the pilot’s mate making a minute inspection of her, and seeing that everything which could possibly be needful for the service and safety of the ship was ready and in its place.

‘I asked him what he was doing, whereupon he answered, “I am inspecting, stranger, just considering,” says he, “the way the things are lying aboard the ship; in case of accidents, you know, to see if anything is missing, or not lying snug and shipshape. There is no time left, you know,” he added, “when God makes a tempest in the great deep, to set about searching for what you want, or to be giving out anything which is not snug and shipshape in its place. God threatens and chastises sluggards. If only He destroy not the innocent with the guilty, a man may be content; or if He turn and save all hands aboard that render good service, thanks be to Heaven.” So spoke the pilot’s mate; and I, with this carefulness of stowage still before my eyes, proceed to enforce my thesis.’

I may add, for it is highly characteristic, that the thesis which Xenophon proceeded to enforce was addressed to his unfortunate girl-wife, to whom he gave lessons in housekeeping when she was a bride. Of course, Xenophon tells us she was delighted, but her real view has not been preserved. Anyway, the Phoenician pilot's mate was a delightful type of seafaring man. He talks like some of the best seamen in Stevenson or Melville. Indeed, the spirit of his words is worthy of the most humane of the Hebrew prophets in feeling. It makes one think that History and the Jews between them must have slandered the Phoenicians when they represent them as cruel votaries of human sacrifice in its most horrible form. Xenophon's kindly ship's officer could never have passed children through the fire to Baal. He would have died before he placed the baby on those dreadful outstretched arms, the arms which gradually relaxed through the heat of the fire kindled below them, and so dropped the helpless victim into the flames.

#### AT SEA OFF THE COAST OF PORTUGAL

*10th August 1923.*—Last night the curtain was rung down on the floating Hotel de (Demi) Luxe and we had a peep, a very small one, but still a peep, into the realities of life at sea. We ran into a thick sea-fog. It was half-past twelve: when, as Racine says in his large way, 'tous dorment'—the passengers, half of the crew, 'et Neptune,' 'et l'armée,' for so I take leave to call the Malay boys who wait on us. Everybody woke up at once at the ominous, forlorn, yet 'determined to be saved,' once-a-minute howl of the siren. It was a thoroughly Dutch siren. It made no attempt to be 'soul music' or music of any kind. It was just a metallic howl—'I am stout, and strong,

and very heavy, and if you bump into me, you'll suffer worse than I shall. So keep out of my way and be damned to you. If you get across my bow and I ram you, you'll not forget it; you'll crumple up unless you're the *Leviathan*, which you can't be in these waters. I'm hove to and offer a good deal of resistance, as the world has always found when it has tried to kick the stern-end of the heavy-bottomed Hollander.' That once-a-minute shout was at first melodramatic. It was menacing when the engines stopped and we lay drifting, a temporary derelict on one of the great pathways of Ocean, the Regent Street of the Northern Atlantic. Later it grew monotonous and even foolish, like the drivel of an old-fashioned watchman: 'Past midnight and a dark and stormy night, and God save us all.' After an hour or two of it, interspersed with an occasional thirty seconds' 'cat-nap,' the thing becomes a nightmare. We forgot the old naval friend who said, 'The sea on a good liner is now far safer than the land—except, of course, in a fog; then anything may happen. A man who says he feels no fear in a fog is a fool, or a liar, or both. It's the half-hour before the operation and the surgeon has telephoned that he may be obliged to be a little late.' We curse the siren, and are willing to take any risks if it will only be quiet. And then out of one of the silent squares of the chequer-board of the night, out of the vague, aimless, useless spaces of the dark, there comes a new voice. Near, yet distant, far-away, and yet somehow quite close at hand, there is suddenly sounding in our ears the heart-cry of another vessel. We are no more alone on a wide, wide sea, but in company—it may be quite close company—with some other puzzled unhappy wanderer of the mist. But there is no consolation in that fateful and desolate companionship. With

sharers of our bewilderment and disquiet we have not one pang the less, but a revelation of our alliance in utter helplessness. We feel like the troop of blind men in Maeterlinck's *Les Aveugles* who have lost their guides in some miserable, ghoulish, delirious picnic in a forest. When they run into each other, as they do in their panic, they feel their mad wretchedness a thousand times increased. They cannot even pretend that they are dreaming, or dead, or just waiting till their attendants find them and take them home. And so the sirens bleat and bellow at each other to keep up their spirits, and fail hopelessly in the attempt. And we, we lie in our beds and pretend not to mind. And in one sense we do not mind. We know that in all probability nothing will happen. There will be no crash, no shivering from stem to stern, no shouted orders, no shrill cries of agony and fear, no gallop of hurrying feet overhead, no list to port or starboard, no inrush of water, at first a tiny dribble, next a rippling brook, and then a fierce torrent. A little wind will get up, the fog will lift, we shall see a big steamer 'comparatively close,' and while we and the other vessel are chattering at each other with signals like two angry and terrified monkeys, our screw will begin to revolve and we to sleep. Next morning on our way to breakfast we shall see spread before us the vast empty spaces of Ocean—maybe without a sign of life except ourselves, a mendicant sea-gull, and a porpoise! As we eat our toast and marmalade we shall wonder how we came to indulge in tragic thoughts, quite out of place in a Marine Hotel complete with gymnasium, hot sea baths, and a band. *Sic transit melancholia maris* is the epitaph I choose, but I hear a fellow-passenger saying that the Purser told the man in the next cabin when he changed a cheque that the Captain said that



they, the other ship, had no right to be where they were. 'They were right across our bows, off their own course and on what they must have known to be ours. They do it to save coal. It ought to be stopped. It's a real scandal, and proves how useless the League of Nations is. I'd fine them ten shillings a ton if I had the power, and then fogs wouldn't be the anxiety they now are to skippers. Last August I never left the bridge for two days and nights, and only slept for an hour when it lifted a little. These Tramp Steamers are the curse of the Ocean. Let alone the way they let down freights.' I do not suppose for a moment that the Captain used this language, or anything like it. It stands here as a modern example of the art so much employed by Livy and other classical historians, the art of concocting speeches on the guesswork principle. No effort is made to report. You simply put down what you think a ship's captain would say in certain circumstances.

## THE CHANCES OF THE NIGHT

*11th August 1923.*—To-day I talked with a young Dutch merchant bound for Java, who gave a most sensational version of what actually happened on the night of the fog. While I lay in my bed with a pleasant, even luxurious, sense of a strictly moderate danger, listened to our siren, and waited for and heard the other melancholy and wistful sounds of the night, my Dutch acquaintance went on deck to see for himself. He found the fog so thick that he could hardly see more than a few yards of deck round the electric lights. But the Captain was evidently leaving no risk uncovered. The crews were already standing to their boats on the two boat decks, and the stores and water had been put into them. Accordingly he

went down to his cabin, got his wife and children dressed and their lifebelts ready—we had tried them on and paraded in them at Boat Drill the day before—and so faced the chances of the night. He behaved, in fact, like a true Dutchman. The race is brave and energetic, but methodical and persistent. Above all, it is not inclined to run avoidable risks. No doubt this can be overdone, but so also can the fatalistic instinct of the Oriental or the sporting attitude of the Englishman. If everybody had done what my Dutchman did, *i.e.* got perfectly ready to do the right thing to meet the threatened danger, the danger, if it had actually pounced, could have been much more easily dealt with than with nothing ready but all to do. There would have been no confusion and no waste of time. No one would have been just too late. The water, in all probability, would not have come in too quickly to allow the stores to be put into the boats. Ten minutes last a good time when every one is ready for them.

It would seem, then, that the danger had been greater than I originally thought.

### THE OFFICIAL VIEW OF OUR FOG PERIL

11th *August*.—There is something irritating in the way in which neutral-tint or dull grey appears to be the natural colour in which to paint all human incidents. This evening I talked with yet another Dutch passenger—a person of consequence with a perfect knowledge of English. He was later described to me as a kind of Batavian Lord Lieutenant, or Prefect of a Department. He shook his head, as an accomplished man of the world always does on such occasions, at the idea of there ever having been the slightest danger of a collision. In the first place, when the

other steamer was supposed to have crossed our bows so closely, our ship had already begun to reverse her engines and was steadily going astern. Therefore it did not matter who crossed her bows. At such a moment her aggressive end was the stern end. Besides, sensational things of the kind rumoured were not likely to happen on Dutch boats, which are very carefully looked after. Finally, there was a Dutch naval officer on the bridge the whole time, and he said that there was never a moment's real risk of any sort or kind. Here, then, was the sealed-pattern official view. What is one to believe? On the whole, I am now inclined to go back to my first view. The incident looked a little nasty at one time, but probably it was not as bad as it seemed, or as it might have been and would have been if we had not been so doggedly cautious.

If the surgeon's hand were to slip in the middle of an operation, there would probably be a regrettable incident. But it is arranged not to slip, and does not slip unless a zero, against which there are a thousand chances to one, happens to turn up. If you have a good head, you don't call walking along a ridge eighteen inches broad dangerous. Reasonable care turns the danger into safety.

So ends the tale of a Fog! But why Sirens? How did the ear-flaying fog-horn get called after the ladies of the rocks who sang so sweet a song to Ulysses—the song that was so nearly too much for that cautious old Mediterranean sailor? The Steamship Companies' Sirens are the limit in the matter of non-allurement. But perhaps, in truth, so also were those of the Greeks. The fact is the Greeks were born journalists and could get 'copy' and write up a good story out of anything. But we need not assume that their account of the Sirens' lyric cry was on oath.

## SIX HOURS LATER

11th August 1923.—I will own to being quite superstitious enough to have hastily begun this second entry so that the preceding digression should, at any rate, not be my last. I do not, of course, believe that I can put a spoke into the wheels of Fate. Still, I somehow like to feel that no one will be able to edit portions of my Diary and say in the preface that there is a curious circumstance connected with it which is worth putting on record. ‘The last words in the MS. read strangely like a premonition of the writer’s demise, etc., etc.’ I have made it quite impossible for any busybody to write like that. This thought of scoring off the Editor of my remains has given me quite an appetite for dinner in spite of the heat (about 85° Fahr.), and I feel I have at any rate taken the first trick in the game I am playing with the Adamantine Destinies. Besides, ‘Who knows that the world will not end to-night?’ as Browning asks with a somewhat unnecessary vehemence. If so, I shall have got my trumps in before it was too late. But probably I shall reach Algiers at eight to-morrow morning, go on an excursion on shore, get back to the ship, and two days later reach Genoa. So passes the shadow on the Dial.

## ARISTOTLE THE LITTLE

12th August 1923.—A sense of gloom has possessed me all day. To be frank, I have had a bitter blow. Beau Brummell announced that he was disappointed in the Prince Regent. I have had a much worse shock. I have been disappointed in Aristotle. I doubt not that a disillusioned Dandy feels a pang as great as when the Editor is confuted. Still my loss

is worse because I was so completely surprised, and because, unlike Beau Brummell, I had everything to make me think that there could be no mistake about the Stagirite. The universal opinion of mankind at all times and in all places, supplemented by a number of telling quotations, often uncanny in their exact adaptability to modern needs, and in their clarity, neatness, and cleverness, had induced me to regard Aristotle throughout my past life with something approaching idolatry. I knew he was hard and practical and matter-of-fact compared to my first love among the philosophers, the divine Socrates, but I always imagined that for the gimlet-minded men of places like Cambridge he shone a bright particular star that nothing could cloud or dim. In a word, I thought him supreme and unchallenged in his own place, though I was perhaps a little hazy as to what that place was.

So with a kind of patronising homage I packed Jowett's translation of the *Politics*, to be one of my deck books from Southampton to Genoa, or, at any rate, as far as Algiers. I imagined myself calling up that astute mind and finding all the phenomena of politics stated and analysed for me with a French precision and pellucidness.

Instead, I found myself plunged into the lecture note-book of a Don, and not even of a super-Don. The writer appears to have put together with an unpardonable haste and irrelevance a course of lectures on 'The State,' fit perhaps for a set of Pass-men in their last term, but for no one else. Such insipid, superficial, unscientific pieces of commonplace, conventional analysis I have never come across before. Categories that are ill-arranged and unexhaustive, postulates that beg all the questions that they are supposed to solve and elucidate; definitions that are

the merest repetitions—‘ Dog, an animal of the canine tribe ’ ; explanations that darken the subject, assumptions that challenge instant contradictions, ‘ platitudes that nauseate,’ truisms that distort, are all muddled together with a pompous air of certainty which irritates and disgusts. That is the kind of thing that meets one in page after page of the *Politics*. ‘ Of States there are eight kinds ’ ; ‘ Constitutions can be divided under five principal heads ’ ; and so on and so on, till the mind grows atrophied and one sighs for the wizard touch of Plato or the magnificent and imaginative conceptions of the pre-Socratics.

When Aristotle gives up his gimcrack analysis and descends to aphorisms and didactic judgments, he is still more repulsive. Indeed, in one’s first angry bewilderment and indignation at his paltry self-sufficiency and pedantic assurance, one fancies one is hearing the pompous jabber of a self-important Sunday School ‘ Professor ’ in some multi-millionaire’s ‘ home town ’ in the Middle West. The Church Institute in the ground floor of that flamboyant unclassable structure in far-away happy Zenith (provided by the said multi-millionaire) rises before me as I write. Aristotle would have got the job ten times over in an international competition open to all creeds and races as arranged for by the ‘ Cuttle-fish ’ Trust. If Dr. Smiles had also run, he would have been nowhere. Again and again one is amazed to find that Aristotle is not ashamed to talk as he does of ‘ Rich ’ and ‘ Poor,’ and use other vague, weak, unstable terms as he does without any attempt at limitation or definition.

Even when he is driven by the force of circumstances to define, he is often paltry in the extreme. Take for example his ramshackle conception of Sovereignty in the State. It is a wretched performance. The Grand Vizier in Racine’s *Bajazet* beats it hollow. When he

does say something good, as is, of course, often the case, for the man was a genius, it is, in the *Politics*, generally put in such a twaddly way that one's stomach is turned.

‘Of oligarchies, one form is that in which the majority of the citizens have some property, but not very much ; and this is the first form which allows to any one who obtains the required amount the right of sharing in the government. The sharers in the government being a numerous body, it follows that the law must govern, and not individuals. For in proportion as they are further removed from a monarchical form of government, and in respect of property have neither so much as to be able to live without attending to business, nor so little as to need state support, they must admit the rule of law and not claim to rule themselves. But if the men of property in the state are fewer than in the former case, and own more property, there arises a second form of oligarchy. For the stronger they are, the more power they claim, and, having this object in view, they themselves select those of the other classes who are to be admitted to the government ; but, not being as yet strong enough to rule without the law, they make the law represent their wishes. When this power is intensified by a further diminution of their numbers and increase of their property, there arises a third and further stage of oligarchy, in which the governing class keep the offices in their own hands, and the law ordains that the son shall succeed the father. When, again, the rulers have great wealth and numerous friends, this sort of dynastic or family despotism approaches a monarchy ; individuals rule and not the law. This is the fourth sort of oligarchy, and is analogous to the last sort of democracy.

There are still two forms besides democracy and oligarchy ; one of them is universally recognized and included among the four principal forms of government, which are said to be (1) monarchy, (2) oligarchy,

(3) democracy, and (4) the so-called aristocracy or government of the best. But there is also a fifth, which retains the generic name of polity or constitutional government; this is not common, and therefore has not been noticed by writers who attempt to enumerate the different kinds of government; like Plato in his books about the state, they recognize four only.'

That is a fair example of Aristotelian political analysis. What he says about Slavery is not merely twaddle. It is evil, poisonous stuff. Aristotle seems to think that people are slaves because they are not fit to be anything else. That freemen become slaves if they are unsuccessful in wars which are not their fault rather worries him, but he muddles along with a conception of, and apology for, slavery which might hold water in the case of black slaves, but is obvious rubbish in the case of Greek slavery. It is a mere lame and disingenuous attempt to excuse something *per se* inexcusable, though something which he personally was most anxious to excuse. In the end he stoops to hint that slavery is necessary to support the very highest type of civilization—a remark which has done a great deal of harm and misled many weak and selfish minds. Slavery is the ruin of civilization, even when the slaves belong to an inferior race. When the slaves are of the same type of flesh and blood as their masters, it is so horrible that one feels that no decent man could tolerate it. In such a view I, at any rate, have the support of Socrates. When he discusses 'the Institution' he makes no sophistical Aristotelian defence, but shows evident signs of abhorrence.



## SPENSER AND THE WHALE

*At Sea. 13th August 1923.*—This morning we saw whales. Where did Spenser see them, I wonder? He must have seen them with his own eyes, or else he would hardly have talked about 'sea-shouldering whales.' Spenser was no doubt a great poet. He must have been. I don't take things on trust, especially poets. It is too serious a matter; but a man who can give that epithet to the whale is clearly a past-master in his craft. Besides, there stands that immortal opening in the Eighth Canto of Book II., 'And is there Care in Heaven and is there Love?' I hope I have quoted properly, but alas! the official of the Dutch Company who chose the English books in our ship's library was—well, let us say, a little limited in vision. He knew Mrs. E. Glyn and several other novelists of punch and promise, 'But ah! of our poor Ned he never heard and we should tease him with our plaint in vain.' I know that if I wrote and complained, I should, no doubt, get a polite letter from Amsterdam in faultless English saying that he had to consider the general taste of 'normal passengers'—a shrewd hit that, at me—and that though the claims of the author I had mentioned would be laid before the Table-Stores, Entertainments and Pleasures Committee of the Board of Directors, he feared that they would hardly feel justified in making any change. A Mr. Shaw (British Dramatist, classed A 1 at Amsterdam University) had at one time been represented by a volume, but as it remained unread for four voyages, according to the report of the Library Steward, it was withdrawn for a novel entitled *What price Julia?* by a more recent author.

Yet Spenser was great, if somehow a failure. In

the first place, he was the leader of the first, if premature, Gothic and Romantic Revival. The ashes of the fires that destroyed the abbeys were hardly cold. The Renaissance was in its eager, passionate youth. In Poetry, in Prose, in Painting, in Architecture, on the Stage, and in the streets, in the monuments of the dead, as in the language of the living, you saw nothing but the Classic touch. The Ionic, the Corinthian, the Doric, the Composite Orders revelled and rioted through the land. No poet or prose writer was complete without a Latinized or Hellenized vocabulary. Greene and Marlowe were quite as irresponsible to Mediaevalism as Pope or as Dryden. Yet in the midst of this apparently complete triumph, one in which the other side has become as if it had never been, Spenser led the first counter-attack of the Romantics and sent his gallant and gentle knight pricking across the plain.

It was splendid, but it was too early, and so Spenser remains the Poets' poet, which is a polite way of saying nobody's poet. And yet he might have been anything. For example, he had in him the seeds of a supreme form of satire. The passage describing the sorrows of the suitor for Court favour is as poignant as anything in literature. It is bursting with passion. I shall quote it, though I have been warned by my terrestrial Votaress, or rather by several of them of both sexes, that this Diary will be ruined if I indulge in a licentious use of the quotation habit. 'The world is tired of irrelevant rhetoric, especially when rhymed,' says one. 'Cut them all out,' adds another, 'and you may yet save the book and secure it quite a success in its own way.'

Well, I won't. I am writing this Diary to please myself and not a hypothetical reader that I have never seen, never shall see, and, if he is what my friends paint him, that I never want to see. I admit I

agreed to print this Diary to please my publisher, most sympathetic of men, and also one of the most indulgent—as indulgent as a great doctor who thinks you are probably pretty bad, but believes so little in medicine that he is not going to worry you or himself or any one else about it. ‘It is all too uncertain for me to risk making a martyr out of a patient.’ But if I began to please some one else, I am going on to please myself. I feel exactly like John Gilpin when he addressed his horse :

‘ ‘Twas for your pleasure I came here.  
You shall go back for mine.’

And so I shall write of Whales, and Poets, and Goths, and Doctors, and Ships’ Captains, and all the rest of it when and how I like. So here is the example of Spenser as a non-Romantic, Renaissance, Elizabethan satirist :

‘To lose good days that might be better spent,  
To waste long nights in pensive discontent,  
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,  
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow,  
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres,  
To have thy asking, yet wait many years,  
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,  
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs,  
To fawne, to crouche, to wait, to ride, to run,  
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.’

*(Mother Hubbard’s Tale.)*

What a digression from Whales through Spenser to the Romantic Revival and satire ! The River of Life is running with a vengeance. Is it perhaps nearing the rapids ? Does it mean a real collision to-night and a wire from Reuter’s Agency describing the catastrophe ‘off Algiers,’ ending ‘Unfortunately Mr. Strachey, the well-known journalist, was not

among the passengers saved. He, or his body, may still be discovered among the floating wreckage, but it is not thought probable, though no doubt a thorough search will be organized by the representatives of the Company.'

### GENOA THE SUPERB

14th August 1923. *At Sea, off the Port of Genoa.*—It is early morning, about six, and we are just entering the harbour of Genoa. There is no approach to any city that I have ever seen which can compare with that of Genoa ;—unless, indeed, it is New York. That is no doubt the most tremendous and amazing landfall on the face of the globe. But while it fascinates, it is in a sense intolerable, which Genoa could never be. She holds the golden mean between grandeur and a happy charm. The scene in that deep-blue Mediterranean bay is set for a glorious *festa*, for delight, for pleasure, for satisfaction. It was the Titans who designed the sea-front of Manhattan, or else some Spirit of uneasy mind—like the Jinn who for his restlessness and uncontrollableness of heart was sealed up in the bottle and buried under the waves. There is nothing exactly sinister, or gloomy, or infernal about New York ; but it is adamant, strenuous, athletic, and there is in it always the note of *Terribilità*. It invites you to the Arena of Life, to the dust and sweat and agony of those who contend in the Palaestra of human effort. Genoa, the gracious Lady of the Waters, asks you to lay your hand in hers and she will show you all the glories of the earth and sky. The blue waves laugh before her throne and, as they sparkle in the sun's ardent beams, sing her praises. Behind her are the purple, grey Apennines. Like faded violets in hue they barricade the horizon, and up their foot-

hills climb the giant houses of the city just as did those of Tyre. It is magnificent, superb—Genoa's own epithet time out of mind—grandiose, full of pomp and splendour, yet never oppressive, never out of proportion, never out of scale, never wild, or eccentric, or capable of awakening the spirit of contempt. Genoa supports grandly the sovereign word of interpretation for all Italy—the word fit to be written over every gate of land or sea by which you enter the enchanted and enchanting land, but most of all over that of her whom all the world acclaims as *La Superba*. That word is Magnanimity, Great-heartedness. Italy is the place of the great-souled, of the noble, of the ingenuous, the undefeated, the undismayed. Italy has always saved herself and will continue to save herself by this quality. She cannot be mean, or petty, or ignoble even in rags or distress. In pain and in sorrow, in tumult and in poverty, in disorder of mind and body, she has always kept her dignity of demeanour. The Italian always aspires not only to do great things, but to do them in the great way, whether it be to build a church, a hospital, or a railway station, paint a picture, or write an ode. Gentle endeavour and the refinement of miniature work—these appeal to him very little. He wants the big brush, the big canvas. What Sir Thomas Browne so well called 'the wild enormities of ancient magnanimity' inspire no fears in his mind. The grandiose does not alarm him, but only the little and the sordid.

This great-heartedness is shown very clearly not only in Italian manners, which have always been the most stately and full-sweeping in the world, but in the Italian titles and the Italian language. For example, the great officials of Venice were content with no less a title than that of 'Magnifico,' and it is from the Italian *lingua franca* of the Levant that we

get such formulas as the 'Grand Seigneur' and the 'Sublime Porte.' It is, however, in architecture, which is essentially the Italian art, that the magnanimity of the Italian is clearest. Nothing is too big, or bold, or splendid for the Italians to attempt in stone or in brick. Where ordinary mortals build a shed, the Italians rear a palace. The sightseer who wanders to the back of St. Peter's in order to get a side-view of how Michael Angelo hung the Pantheon in heaven, will realize what I mean, provided he looks down into the huge foundations of St. Peter's. There he will see displayed a sort of giant's version of a London area. The foundations seize the earth in a kind of titanic grasp which makes one feel, to quote Sir Thomas Browne once more, that 'man is a noble animal.' Rome, indeed, is full of Italian magnanimity in stone. St. Peter's and the Vatican are no exceptions, but simply examples. The Coliseum and the Pantheon stand to show that the ancient Roman masons and architects were never content unless they could 'lick creation.' The modern Italian is quite as determined to do his bit greatly. When the Italians entered Rome in 1870 they were as a nation exceedingly hard-up. They had the biggest debt per head in Europe, they had a greatly depreciated paper currency, and the Italian people were groaning under the heaviest load of taxation in Europe. All this, one might suppose, would have made the Government keep off expensive bricks and mortar in a city already filled with glorious buildings, a city which needed no adornment from modern hands. Not a bit of it! The first thing that the Italian Government did was to build the biggest Treasury in the world—to match, said cynical critics, the biggest national indebtedness. It is true that they only built in brick and stucco, and in a style of architecture which can hardly be

called satisfactory—that of the Third Empire. Nevertheless, up went a building which by a foot or two beats the Vatican itself for size, and must be admitted to be a potent and sound piece of work in spite of its obvious faults.

Perhaps one of the most complete examples of the passion for great-hearted buildings in Italy is afforded by the little city of Parma. Parma was never a great State, nor had it ever great rulers or great artists, except Correggio. Yet the people of Parma were always at it with the trowel and chisel. The brick arcades of Parma's sixteenth-century palace made me uncover my head and bend my knee to the shades of their noble creators. The brickwork here can only be described as glorious. But Parma (like every other Italian town) at some one special point strives to reach the architectural limit. In this case it is the theatre—a theatre built for a royal marriage, but a theatre which holds four thousand people. It is true that a great many of the adornments are pasteboard. You see huge statues which look very well from the pit or stalls or their equivalents, but which, when you get up close, are only a quarter of an inch thick. Half the balustrades and architectural features, indeed, are either pasteboard or painted in chiaroscuro on lath-and-plaster backgrounds. For all that, the building is in conception magnificent.

When Napoleon's Marie Louise went to live in Parma, one would have thought the authorities would have had no difficulty in housing her in the old palace. But that would not do at all. They built for her the very coquettish, but also very large, 'Neo-Grec' *palazzo*—now, if I remember rightly, the home of the Prefect. Near this palace is a church of about 1730 or so, which, though it has no particular architectural *raison d'être*, is quite splendid in its proportions.

Outside Parma also there happens to be a large fort, but without any special history or importance. Yet any historian whose mind is attuned to understand bricks and mortar might deduce from it the whole spirit of the Italian people. The gates and ditches, ravelins, curtains, and horn-works, as Uncle Toby would say, all breathe forth magnanimity.

*15th August.*—Perhaps it may be urged that I was overdoing my point when yesterday I wrote of Italian magnanimity in architecture, and I shall be told that the small towns of Italy have grandiose buildings only because Italy was broken up into small States. My answer is that you can take plenty of minute towns in Italy which were never anything but provincial towns (towns which were never independent communities or owned a tyrant of their own) in which great-heartedness is just as apparent in their buildings as in the local capitals. Take Novara. Novara is a town of twenty-five thousand inhabitants. Its name is known to the world outside Italy only because of the battle of 1849, in which the Piedmontese were defeated by the Austrians. Baedeker tells us that ‘it abounds in monuments.’ It certainly does. The church of San Gaudenzio, erected in 1577, has a dome only short by thirty-six inches of four hundred feet in height. St. Paul’s is four hundred and four feet high from the ground to the top of the cross. The Cathedral, which was rebuilt in 1831, is a piece of portentous academic ‘Neo-Grec’ which literally takes away the ordinary traveller’s breath, so appalling is it in size, clammy magnificence, and pedantic dullness. Looking back upon a hasty visit, the present diarist wonders whether, after all, it really exists, and whether what he thinks he saw was not an architectural nightmare inspired by some dim remembrance



of Martin's illustrations to *Paradise Lost*. It would indeed be something in the nature of a relief if somebody who knows Novara would write and tell me that there is no such building.

Everything in Novara is on a colossal scale, and yet the town has, as I have said, only twenty-five thousand inhabitants, and never had more. It was never a capital of a State, or even the head town of some great Fief. Think of it. Let any Englishman recall the English towns he knows of twenty-five thousand inhabitants and the kind of architecture they possess ! I am not now talking, remember, of the beauties of architecture, but of magnanimity of size and grandeur, even of the grandiose in conception. While the people of an Italian town of twenty-five thousand inhabitants would never be content to build except on the grand scale, an English town of the same size revels in a kind of architectural squalor, or at best produces some tiny little ' refinement ' in stone or brick.

Amazing as is the example of Novara, that of Chiavari—a fascinating little town on the Ligurian coast, half-way between Genoa and Spezia—is even more soul-shaking. Chiavari has some thousand inhabitants. The streets, old and new, are arcaded in the most delightfully picturesque manner, often with pointed arches. The principal church, Santa Madonna del Orto (1613), now a Cathedral, is a spacious and dull classical building on a large scale. But that, again, is not what concerns us. What does concern us in this context is the huge portico of Carrara marble Corinthian columns, as big almost as those in the Parthenon, which was clapped on to the church in a sort of constructional frenzy, without the slightest sense of architectural fitness, in the year 1835. Remember what Italy was, or rather the little state of Piedmont, to which Chiavari then belonged, in the

'thirties. Italy, socially, politically, and economically, touched bottom in those deadly years. Yet lo and behold ! a group of pious and, we must suppose, well-to-do gentlemen in this little coast town, with about a mile of foreshore and for hinterland a valley a quarter of a mile broad running inland for about three miles, and then the mountains rising literally like a stone wall, agreed that they would like to fit a white marble portico to their church with monolithic marble columns forty feet high. Why should not Chiavari do herself as well as Athens in the way of porticoes ? Why not indeed ? What in those days would have dumbfounded a city like London or Liverpool or Manchester does not seem to have made the Chiavari people turn a hair. The church appeared to them to want a portico, or rather they wanted an architectural ' jolly ' in good, hard, bright marble and sound mortar, and so great and stout of heart were they that it did not occur to them to have anything less than a portico equal to the greatest in the world. If it did not quite fit the church, so much the worse for the church. The portico was not going to suffer, said the good men and true of 1835, because of an inadequate *Duomo*. We picture them rushing at the design like mad bulls. ' Down with the craven who said forty-five feet was too high or six columns too many ! We are not out to build a pigsty.' Accordingly up went the columns, and there stands the portico glued on the church, just as a child might glue a new toy on to an old one. No doubt the townsmen of Chiavari intended some day or other to bring their already big cathedral up to date, and case its brick and stucco walls in Carrara marbles to match the portico. Instead, however, they have deviated into materialism, and build Frenchified boulevards with enormous colonnades, very ugly, but very grandiose. The

portico therefore still sticks out, with a ragged edge, about ten feet beyond the Cathedral walls. No matter ; Chiavari has got a portico which will warm the heart of any architectural enthusiast, and make him feel what noble creatures were the burgesses of 1835. Once more remember what 1835 was in Europe, and the kind of stuff that was put up in England, or even in France, at that epoch, and then look and wonder at the portico of Chiavari. 'The large portico added in 1835' is all that the bewildered Baedeker can find breath to say of it. He had to leave it at that. You want to know something of the soul of Italy and her blood-stirring devotion to stone and brick, and construction for the sake of construction, to understand 'the large portico added in 1835.' It contains the secret of Italy, old and ever young. But what normal German ever really understood the heart of anything ? The German mind moves on the surface, and is simply puzzled by the things unseen.

Let no one imagine from what I have written above that I think Italy is only magnanimous in stone and great-hearted in bricks and mortar. In the things of the spirit she is of royal mood.

#### ITALY THE DIVINE. SACRI MONTI

15th August 1923.—While I am dealing with things Italian and offering a kind of bidding-prayer in gratitude for her gifts of beauty and peace of heart, I must not forget her *Sacri Monti*. For there I am specially bidden to pray and offer thanks : 'And herein for Orta, Varallo, and Varese, benefactors of the human race.' But first I must describe and explain, for I expect that to many people a *Sacro Monte* means nothing. The foothills of the Italian Alps possess a form of national

monument conspicuous for beauty even in the land which possesses beauty as a dower—the *Sacro Monte*, or Holy Hill. The *Sacro Monte* is some comparatively low isolated hill or spur of mountain, set as a rule in view of the spacious plain of Piedmont on the one side and of the Alpine range on the other, dedicated, through the medium of the figurative arts, to religious uses and religious memories. The Italians of Piedmont, fired with that passion for decorating the world which possessed all Italy in the past and still inspires her, were not content to construct spacious cathedrals and churches, and every other type of building majestic and delicate, to carve or cast glorious statues, or to set men's hearts ablaze with the painter's brush on canvas or on the plastered wall. These people of the hills devised a scheme by which, in the most exquisite of natural surroundings, the arts of the sculptor, of the painter, of the landscape gardener, and even of the groupers and marshallers of the stage, should each and all be called on to contribute to 'the glory of God' and the beautifying of a noble countryside. In the *Sacro Monte* every form of art is employed, and yet all are subordinated to form one perfect whole. The spirit of the Italian is never, like that of the Northerner, satisfied with a piece of beautiful work in isolation. He yearns for, and searches to set forth, an ordered and balanced composition.

The men who designed the *Sacri Monti* of Piedmont had the vault of Heaven for the theatre in which to set their scenes. I will take the *Sacro Monte* at Orta as an example of which I am writing about. It is not as great or as magnificent, from the point of view of sculpture, painting, or architecture, as that of Varallo, but it is more easily described. On a spur of the hills overlooking an exquisite mountain lake the builders of the *Sacro Monte* presented their offering to God.

They carved out of their native woodlands a scheme of green and winding glades overshadowed by tall chestnuts and stately pines and beeches—never too many or too few, but exhibiting the happiest mixture of Nature and of Art. And always between leaves and branches, even in the height of summer, the pilgrims of the hill catch glimpses of the blue lake and its island town, or of the bluer sky and the widespread plain. Through this hill park wander broad and sinuous roads, or wide paths, sometimes wholly of grass, and sometimes of stone. The stone-pitched paths have those broad, shallow steps which decorate all the hills of Italy, whether in the Alps or Apennines—a heritage from the Roman roadmakers. Bordering these roads are set, with an artful innocence of design that defies analysis, a series of exquisite Chapels built in mountain stone and hard plaster. The Orta Chapels are the perfection of that garden architecture which is Italy's singular prerogative. The little classical buildings which delight one in the backgrounds of primitive pictures, but which one never sees in bricks and mortar in the towns, are scattered with a lavish hand throughout the sylvan solitudes of the Orta hillside. I can best describe the Orta Chapels, with the delicate wan Italian grass growing up to the short slight steps which lead to the little platforms on which they stand, as a mixture of a summer-house and a shrine. The Chapels of the *Sacro Monte* at Orta are not merely the usual Stations of the Cross, but illustrate the life of St. Francis of Assisi, and are inspired by the legend or belief that the saint went through, in his own person, the various stages of his Master's life. St. Francis's life story is not left to men's imaginations. Each Chapel contains its figurative record, and not, as generally in Italian shrines, by paintings on the wall, but by groups of

life-sized terracotta figures, moulded and painted, as if they were dressed in real silks, cottons, and brocades. The groups are in the foreground, and fade in the background into fresco work. The arts of the theatre are here freely employed. Just as in the foreground of a great stage set one has the real men and women, and in the sides and background painted cloths, so in each Chapel of the *Sacro Monte* the story is told by a dramatic mechanism. It is like an elaborate stage scene in a Miracle Play in which all the actors have suddenly been petrified. Perhaps in the full blaze of sunlight the effect may sometimes seem a little too theatrical, a little too much like a giant peepshow. But as a rule this disillusionment is only momentary, and while it lasts one has only got to turn one's eyes to the waving boughs of the chestnut or the beech, and to the divine garden, which one feels was quite as much in the minds of those who laid out the *Sacro Monte* as were the Chapels and their contents.

But why should North Italy have a monopoly of the beautiful art which has its manifestation in the *Sacro Monte*? Why should not other hills and other groves have a like inspiration? The exquisite dwarf oaks of the Welsh mountains provide exactly the amount of woodland required. Beneath their boughs there is no tangled undergrowth, but the grass is short and sweet, and the glades are diversified with stately rocks covered with lichen. Nothing would be easier, without the slightest defacement of Nature, but rather with its enhancement, than to trace paths, sometimes flat, sometimes rising in shallow steps, and to place an ascending series—never formal, yet never haphazard or unmotivated—of architectural Shrines or Chapels.

North Wales is, as I have said already, pictorially the most beautiful part of the British Islands. The

geological formation of the mountains, the fact that they rise in so many places so close to the sea, and something perhaps in the atmosphere, give to the scenery of North Wales a character for magnificence in little which is only to be matched in the hills of Italy. The mountains of North Wales are not merely beautiful for Britain, but have an exquisiteness which entitles them to the admiration of the whole world.

Dr. Johnson, as is recorded by Mrs. Piozzi, when on his Welsh tour, spoke of a Welsh landlord famous for his 'vast and sudden improvements.' Will not some Welsh landlord of wealth, imagination, and public spirit commission one of our architects to make him a Sacred Hill in some appropriate spur of oak-clad mountain? I know of a dozen places in North Wales fitted to receive the shrines. Surely there must be some takers of such a suggestion for winning fame and the gratitude of all lovers of the beautiful. Our millionaires think nothing of giving a picture, or a cabinet, or a Chinese-jar, worth £40,000, to a Museum. Why not one a *Sacro Monte*?

#### AN APOLOGY TO ARISTOTLE

16th August 1923.—I have been reading over what I wrote at sea about Aristotle's *Politics*. I was clearly in a bad temper. The *Politics* may, and I think do, deserve all I said, but not the man. He was a very great, if a very unsympathetic figure. Politically he was, no doubt, a reactionary and also a man of statecraft like Bacon. He was a great observer, like all the Greeks, but I feel that he observed cities and Governments, not to find out the best form, but to side-track popular Government. He wanted receipts for dodging Democracy and found them with a pitiful ingenuity un-

worthy of a true Philosopher. Note the silly observations about Agricultural States being fit for Democratic Institutions because the bulk of the people were busy with field services. The shepherds and other pastoralists in Agricultural States would not, he slyly noted, take the trouble to come to the Assemblies and vote, or sit on Juries, and so they could be safely trusted with these functions. What a paltry, politic old man! No doubt such comments were often put into the mouths of other people, but, even if he turned up his eyes in pretended protest, we feel that he really relished what he reprimanded.

All the same, when Aristotle touched Poetry, Science, Rhetoric, Ethics, or any purely abstract subject such as Metaphysics, he was divine, or, at any rate, divinely shrewd and penetrative. In his Biological writings Aristotle seems to have come extraordinarily near to the latest doctrine of the 'Life-Urge.' Take, for example, the wonderful sentence :

'We must conclude that man does not owe his superior intelligence to his hands, but his hands to his superior intelligence.'

Aristotle may seem a little old-fashioned when he talks about Nature with a big N, but we have only got to substitute for 'Nature' 'the Life-Urge,' and we shall soon see that Aristotle was thinking along very modern lines. Here is another illustration of this fact :

'It was evident to Aristotle'—I quote from a summary by an American writer, Dr. Henry Osborn Taylor—"that the nutritive and motor life of soul could not exist without the body: "Plainly those principles whose activity is bodily cannot exist without a body, *e.g.* walking from outside." But the final problem—"a question of the greatest difficulty," says



Aristotle—is: “When and how and whence is a share in reason acquired by those animals that participate in this principle?” His answer is, that, unlike the nutritive and motor life, the reason, the rational soul, alone enters from without and “alone is divine, for no bodily activity has any connection with the activity of reason.”

This will no doubt seem crude to many people, but I should not be surprised if in the end it proves less crude than the hypothesis of the pure materialists. The vital principle, the ‘Life-Urge,’ the soul—call it what we like—is a fact, and cannot be explained away or completely accounted for in terms of materialism. As Dr. Henry Osborn Taylor puts it:

‘Biology to-day inclines to hold that no adequate description of the living organism can be framed in categories of “matter” and “energy.”’

In other words, and as I have already said in verse in the Diary, at the final audit of ‘Man and Co.’s’ activities in the universe we must expect to find what is called in the balance-sheet of certain great businesses an ‘unassignable’ or ‘unanalysable’ profit. This is something which does definitely exist, but for which it is exceedingly puzzling, perhaps impossible, to find the proper place in the ‘Profit and Loss Account.’

In the same way, in chemical analysis there is apt to be something over—something which undoubtedly exists but which will not fit in with our existing conceptions and definitions. For a long time the Vitamines were ignored in chemical analysis. Now they are known to exist, though their constituent parts have not yet been discovered, and possibly may never be discovered.

In this context I cannot do better than quote the

following admirable summing-up by Dr. Osborn Taylor in his recent book :

‘ Phrases change ; and thinking takes a new direction from the new phrase and seems to flow in untried channels. The old phrase becomes an alien. Few of us to-day could bring ourselves to accept *eo nomine* the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ —the soul, or, if one will, the organic life in its ascending scale—as the entelechy, to wit, “ the form or actuality of a natural body having in it the capacity of life.” More specifically the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  is the “ first entelechy,” or actuality, standing as knowledge stands to the exercise of knowledge in speculation. This “ soul ” is the formative principle of the body and the body’s end or final cause, even as speculative activity ( $\tau\acute{o}$  θεωρεῖν) is the soul’s final end. Such statements are not of our time. Yet, perhaps, they are not so far from our intellectual purposes. Do we not think that all the sciences, including those having to do with organisms, contribute to the soul, which is life, and indeed the highest life which is of the mind ? This is the Aristotelian view, and one properly belonging to a man who saw life whole and realized the splendour of its manifestations, beyond the fields of science, in art and literature, in tragedy and epic poetry. The “ end ” of the body is the human personality made up not only of its intellectual strainings, but of its nobler impulses and more sublime emotions, the sense of holiness and beauty and other unanalysable things of human experience.’

Of all this Aristotle had a wonderful intuition, and for this quality we may even excuse and forgive the *Politics*. Nor was this all. When Aristotle analysed human nature in a scientific spirit, he had an unrivalled touch. Consider his contrast between old and young opinion in his *Treatise on Rhetoric*. It is a triumph in dialectical skill, and as true now as when it was written. In order that the *amende honorable* by the

Blackbeetle to the Almighty Sage shall be complete, I will quote it in full :

‘ The young are in character prone to desire and ready to carry any desire they may have formed into action. They are changeful, too, and fickle in their desires, which are as transitory as they are vehement, for their wishes are keen without being permanent, like a sick man’s fits of hunger and thirst. They are passionate, irascible and apt to be carried away by their impulses. They are the slaves, too, of their passion, as their ambition prevents their ever brooking a slight and renders them indignant at the mere idea of enduring an injury. And while they are fond of honour, they are fonder still of victory ; for superiority is the object of youthful desire, and victory is a species of superiority. Again, they are fonder both of honour and of victory than of money, the reason why they care so little for money being that they have never yet had experience of want. They are charitable rather than the reverse, as they have never yet been witnesses of many villainies ; and they are trustful, as they have not yet been often deceived. They are sanguine, too ; for the young are heated by Nature as drunken men by wine ; besides, they have not yet experienced frequent failures. Their lives are lived principally in hope, as hope is of the future and memory of the past, and while the future of youth is long, its past is short ; for on the first day of life the field of memory is empty, the field of hope infinite. For the same reason they are easily deceived, as being quick to hope. They are inclined to be courageous ; for they are full of passion, which excludes fear, and of hope, which inspires confidence, as anger is compatible with fear, and the hope of something good is itself a source of confidence. They are bashful, too, having as yet no independent standard of honour and having lived entirely in the school of convention. They have high aspirations, for they have never yet been humiliated by the experience of life, but are unacquainted with the

limiting force of circumstances ; and a great idea of one's own deserts, such as is characteristic of a sanguine disposition, is itself a form of high aspiration. Again, in their actions, they prefer honour to expediency, as it is habit rather than calculation which controls their lives, and, while calculation pays regard to expediency, virtue pays regard exclusively to honour. Youth is the age when people are most devoted to their friends or relations or companions, as they are then extremely fond of social intercourse, and have not yet learnt to judge their friends or indeed anything else by the rule of expediency. If the young commit a fault, it is always on the side of excess, for they carry everything too far, whether it be their love or hatred or anything else. They regard themselves as omniscient and are positive in their assertions ; this is in fact the reason of their carrying everything too far. Also, their offences take the line of insolence and not of meanness. They are compassionate from supposing all people to be virtuous or at least better than they really are, for, as they estimate their neighbours by their own innocence, they regard the evils which befall them as undeserved. Finally, they are fond of laughter, and consequently facetious, facetiousness being disciplined insolence.'

So much for the Young. Now for the father who begot them :

' Such being the character of the young, it may be said generally that elder men who have passed their prime have characters mostly composed of the qualities opposite to these. For as they have lived many years and have been often the victims of deception and error, and as vice is the rule rather than the exception in human affairs, they are never positive about anything and always err on the side of too little excess. They "suppose," and they never "know" anything ; and in discussion they always add "perhaps" or "possibly," expressing themselves in-

variably in this guarded manner, but never positively. They are uncharitable, too, *i.e.* they are ready to put the worst construction upon everything. Again, they are suspicious of evil from not trusting anybody, and they do not trust anybody from having had experience of human wickedness. Hence, too, they have no strong loves or hatreds; but their love is such as may some day be converted into hatred, and their hatred such as may some day be converted into love. Their temper of mind is neither grand nor generous; not the former, for they have been so much humiliated by the experience of life as to have no desire of any great or striking object or of anything but the mere appliances of life; nor the latter, for property is a necessity of life, and they have learnt by experience the difficulty of acquiring it and the facility with which it may be lost. They are cowards and perpetual alarmists, their disposition being exactly contrary to that of the young; for, as they are not fervent like the young, but have cooled down, their old age has in consequence paved the way for cowering, fear itself being a sort of cooling process. They are fond of life, and never so fond of it as on their last day; for it is the absent which is the object of all desire, and that which we most lack we are most desirous to possess. They are selfish to a fault, selfishness again being a species of mean-mindedness. And from their selfishness it follows that their standard of life is too apt to be expediency rather than honour, for expediency is what is good to the individual and honour what is good in an absolute sense. They are apt to be shameless rather than the contrary, for, as they pay less regard to honour than to expediency, they are able to disregard appearances. They are despondent, too, partly from their experience of life—for the generality of things which occur in the world are bad or at least do not turn out so well as they might—and partly from their cowardly disposition. Again, they live by memory rather than by hope, for while the remainder of their life is necessarily short, its past is long, and the future is the

sphere of hope, the past the sphere of memory. This, too, is the explanation of their garrulity; they are perpetually talking over what has happened in the past because of the pleasure they feel in recollection. It is calculation rather than character which regulates their lives, for the end of calculation is expediency, but the end of character is virtue. The offences which they commit take the line of petty meanness rather than of insolence. The old are compassionate as well as the young, not however for the same reason, for in one case the reason is humanity, and in the other infirmity, as the old suppose all manner of suffering to be at their door, and this is a state of mind which, as we have said, excites compassion. Hence they are querulous, not facetious nor fond of laughter.'

#### SESTRI LEVANTE

*17th August 1923.*—Sestri Levante once more. Ten years have gone, and the bay still laughs without a stain at the feet of the hills which ring it in. Still it shows a profusion of perfection in outline and colouring. No doubt to many eyes that perfection would be as great a non-conductor of sympathy as is the similar quality in the music of Mendelssohn, in the poetry of Tennyson and of Swinburne, and in the painting of Veronese. Fortunately I have as strong a stomach for Nature, for the Mediterranean, and for the arts generally as Halifax tells us had Charles II. for his mistresses. I like the goblet full, and do not demand a dry vintage. And so I revel once more in Sestri, and find its unchangeability delightful. The little town is all that my memory painted it for me, as each year during the war holiday time came round. Our rooms were actually taken for August 1914, and every year since it was always a case of, 'Well, then, we must go next year.'

In Sestri Levante you see all that in ordinary work-day Architecture is adored. There is no great or supremely beautiful building, but also there is no bad building. The whole town has got the grand air in its proportions, and the charm of that valiant sense of colour which never deserts the Italian whether he is painting a boat, the wayside shrine of *Una Madonna* as an urchin once replied to my question as to the saintship of a shrine, or the outside of a palace, a church, a railway station, or a cemetery. The Italian can be as vulgar as a French official architect or as a District Council Surveyor in his design, but it is rare indeed to find him mixing his colours with mud as is the tragic habit of our builders.

Sestri's earlier buildings are good, but its special glory and most obvious charm is to be found in the additions made quite late in its civic and, low be it spoken, very commonplace and undistinguished career. In the period 1816-1836 Sestri had, however, a real run of luck. There is a little round Customs Office in the port which shows perfection of attainment in the thing aimed at in the happiest manner. It is only about twenty feet high and has a diameter of about fifteen feet, and yet, so happy are the proportions, so exactly is the cornice placed in the right place and of the right design, and so deftly is the circle broken to make room for two little Tuscan columns and a recessed porch, that the eye is feasted with delight. 'Ah, no doubt, very pretty; but remember with that Ligurian oölite building-stone these effects are really quite easy to get.' So says Papworth Minimus, but he is mistaken. The circular Customs House and Office of the Harbour Master of Sestri is not built of Ligurian oölite or Parian marble, or of anything other than higgledy-piggledy brickwork or else mere rubble, plentifully plastered and with all the decorations and mouldings

in hard lime plaster. Paint does the rest and shows that, no matter how small his means, nor how poor his material, if you leave him alone and do not corrupt him with French, or English, or German mannerisms, the Italian will pour out an endless stream of elegance, glory, and felicity in stone or cement, brick or plaster. Only to-day I walked on the breakwater which leans against a magnificent piece of sea-ravaged rock hurled from the bosom of the mountains when, in some vast convulsion of Nature, the crashing Poles unbound the ligatures of the Globe. On the top of a huge wedge-like erratic block, some twenty feet high and with sides as steep as those of a house, I saw a mason finishing off an exquisite little shrine in which a Mariner's Madonna was to be placed. It was in the rough at eight in the morning. It was all neatly plastered when I passed it at seven in the evening, and to-morrow no doubt it will be painted. It is the size of a big doll's house, and the little arch and mouldings round it are full of charm.

#### CONCERNING CATS (ITALIAN VARIETY)

*17th August 1923.*—Something ought to be done, and very soon, about Italian cats. They are a disgrace to their species. They are lanky and ill-bred, and timid and ugly, and uncertain of themselves, and their ears are horribly long and often bald. They slink where they should stalk. They look as if they were perpetually dodging things that were being thrown at them. 'It does me harm to see them,' as Carlyle said when on his first visit to the Continent he saw the priests and monks of Antwerp. I wish I was younger and I would found a Society (registered as a Limited Liability Company under the Act) for the Improvement of the Breed of Cats 'in the Italian



Peninsula and the Islands of Sicily, Sardinia, Elba and Pantellaria.' The only attempt up till now to deal seriously with the Italian cat was on a side-issue, and, I gather, almost wholly infructuous. I am told that about 1858 a young Englishman, the Reverend James Simpkin, P.P., a Puseyite and a Ruskinian, wrote or contemplated a book on 'The Cat in Early Tuscan and Umbrian Art, with an Introductory Chapter by John Ruskin, Esq., M.A.' Whether the book was ever put into circulation I do not know. It may never have got beyond the publisher's announcements. I am not, however, eager about it, for I am sure the Early Painters knew nothing and cared nothing about the true nature and magnanimity of cats. The cat in his glory is essentially a seventeenth and eighteenth century animal. The cat, of course, existed in the Middle Ages, and fiercely, slyly, and precariously struggled to catch mice and even rats, but he must have loathed the troubled, passionate, dirty, unluxurious ways of that world of Bandits and Tyrants, Saints and Artists, St. Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Saint Catherine of Siena, the 'divine Isotta' of Rimini, Caesar Borgia and his unhappy 'friends.' The cat cannot give his strange personality its rights unless he has leisure and luxury, and there was neither in Italy till 1550. Some thirty or forty years after that the self-respecting, dominating cat begins to appear on the canvases of the Painters, and to appear, not a lean, furtive, vagrant, and nocturnal creature, but as a master.

One recalls at once the excellently characterized cat in Paul Veronese's great picture in the Louvre of 'The Banquet in the House of Simon.' The cat, indifferent, but vaguely tolerant of the great and abundant ladies and their fierce lords and all the splendour, lies on his back and plays energetically

and yet delightfully, and as if it were the only thing in the world worth doing, with a ball of string. His great back-paws are working like swift strong pistons to kick the ball and tear it to pieces.

Still more moving is the superb black cat seated on a table by the side of the Doge Pallavicini of Genoa—about 1630, if I remember right. The picture is, or used to be, described in the guide-books—I have not seen it since I was seventeen, but the impression is vivid—as ‘The Doge Pallavicini with his favourite Cat.’ I always loved that description. It seemed to suggest a palace full of great lazy cats, hundreds of them, who sat on the roofs in the sun in the winter, and moved indoors in the summer heats and sat in the great marble halls and staircases. Apparently the Doge loved one face from out the hundreds and made him or her his favourite. But the word is really the wrong word. The cat is too dominant. It is not the portrait of a doge, but of a cat ‘with doge in background.’ You don’t look at the doge, but only at the noble black cat with very short ears, a flattish head, small half-shut eyes, and his tail neatly curled round his toes. That is the cat of quality, but you never see his like now in Italy. How is that? The men and women of Italy are as proud in movement and as handsome as ever. Why not the cats? There must be something wrong. Therefore let some good cat-lover be up and doing and import a strain of British prize cats into Italy. It is a work well worth accomplishment. But, after all, there may be no need. Why should not Mussolini take up the matter? If only he could be induced to do so, the thing would be done. If His Excellency would only sign a decree, I feel convinced that all the kittens born after its promulgation would become plump, dignified, and possessed of a proper sense of their importance. That

the Prime Minister is a lover of cats actual or potential I feel sure. The cat is a dictatorial animal, though I admit hardly a co-operator, or inspired with the Fascist ideals of union and solidarity. Still there are black shirts among them in plenty !

### THE MUNICIPIO—UNRECORDED

18th August 1923.—To-day we walked in the town, part for our ease—the sun was hot and the streets are shady—but ‘the greater part for pride,’ for we have been caught by the influence of the town and feel about it as do the Sestrians, a people living at ease, like Homer’s Phæacians, but very devoted to the *Città*. All the big houses are good, the Villa Balbi is magnificent, and the Municipio inside is as exquisite a piece of work as the eye of the most fastidious could desire. First for the Villa Balbi. Outside of Italy it would be a perfect monstrosity in the street of any town of the population and importance of Sestri Levante. It is about the size of Lansdowne House—a little less in length, but higher and more compact, and therefore with quite as many rooms. It also has attached to it a large building with a Madonna in a niche and a door marked *Opera Pia*, which I take to mean a kind of Private Almshouse and Clinic, or Hospital. It abuts on the garden, which is filled quite to the brim with palms, vast oleanders, ilexes, and mixed flowering shrubs, all busy crowding into a shade like the trees in Pope’s Eclogue—‘Trees where you sit shall crowd into a shade.’ It was to these words that Bononcini made such divine music. Between the *Opera Pia* and the Villa proper is a vast and rather futile, pompous, and pretentious gateway. It leads nowhere, and the grotesque heads and stout *Putti*, and the ornaments generally, look as if they

had been well poulticed, and so rendered gross and emollient in outline. All the same, I would not have it altered. It is noble to put up such things. I can see the Conte or Marchese, whichever he was, who built the gateway, measuring the available gap between the *Opera Pia* Dépendence and the Villa in a fever of excitement, and note him standing back with a flourish after discovering that there was *just* room to get in a pillared gateway 'with wings' about two feet wider than the great gateway of the Doria or some 'ranking' Villa or Palazzo of Quality in Genoa. So up went the new Barocco gateway and was painted light buff. The Villa itself is imposing, but originally was a very reticent and quiet semi-rural building of the end of the seventeenth century, with a good ground floor, respectable Mezzanine, spacious *Piano Nobile*, and useful attic, with windows of the same size as the Mezzanine. All is topped by a reputable, appropriate, and sufficient cornice. There was, however, no masonry ornament except the just-noted cornice, a nice set of plain mouldings round the windows, and a charming round arch door outlined in white marble. That was all excellent and most appropriate. But apparently there was a 'Brighter Sestri' movement in the town about fifty years ago, and then some one had the whole of the huge façade of the Villa painted salmon pink, inclining to a brown. All sorts of features were invented and picked out in pink—sham perspectives, illusory festoons, bogus stone-dressings, and all the rest of it. You cannot, however, vulgarize anything so grandiose by nature, and so well proportioned as the Villa Balbi, though it all seems rather a pity. Curiously enough, if the colour had been a really good pink, or a bright buff, with white outlinings, the effect had been delicious. Nevertheless, the Balbi in its freshness and sturdy

magnificence—it was thoroughly ‘done over’ inside ten years ago—is very satisfactory. The wonder is how coolly the Italians take their big houses. Probably the owner has the income of a retired English Public School Master or Colonial Bishop; but the size of his house does not seem to worry him in the least. In England a man with such a house must be a millionaire, or the father-in-law of a new rich heiress, or perish in the attempt to live in it. Then there would be a movement to turn it into a school, or a hospital, or offices, or a suburban club, or museum. Here in Italy they take their ‘huge structures’ quite calmly, and do not put up the white flag at practical calculations such as the following: ‘It would take six housemaids at least, and four in the kitchen, and four men in the pantry, and then the men must do half the ground-floor rooms and all the balconies.’ Alas, this passion for organic cleanness assorts but ill with Art! It goes specially ill with grandiose architecture! Civilization may sometimes go forward on a powder-cart, but Art droops, halts, staggers, and collapses when faced with such masters as the refuse collector’s wagon or the Urban District Destructor. Only the Greeks knew how to combine beauty and ‘hygienic conditions.’ Did they not make Health into a Goddess, and yet not make her in the very least ridiculous—not a sort of Beatified V.A.D. in a bath sheet complete with bag of bandages, clinical thermometer, and tourniquet, but an Olympian maid with hair divinely dressed to show her well-poised head, her shapely shoulders and her gloriously moulded arms, a creature whose gait proclaimed the Goddess?

Now for the Municipio. It deserves two entries ‘of about three thousand words each,’ as the Editors or Publishers say when they make merchandise of us.

And a good thing, too, let me say in passing. These same practical officials of the world of letters save us from the very worst of ills—from allowing our follies to fester into crimes. We Literary People can hardly have too many reminders that we are not the noble benefactors of the Human Race which we and our families and friends are apt to pretend to themselves and ourselves that we are. They, the said Editors and Publishers, recall to us the wholesome, if unpalatable fact that we are not Gods but men, and rather small men at that !

‘ Mon Dieu, quels hommes !

Quels petits hommes !

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, qu’ils sont petits ! ’

A Publisher, not meaning in the least to be cynical, ironic, or unkind, but simply thinking aloud, once spoke to a friend of mine as follows : ‘ There ’s no sort of doubt about it, your last book was a big success. There has been nothing like it in my time ’ (author purrs applause). ‘ Absolutely ’ (with enthusiasm). ‘ Now that was simply because we hit the exact right moment for publishing. A week earlier or later would have been no good.’ Then with increasing eagerness and conviction he went on : ‘ If we had brought it out in the spring we shouldn’t have sold a copy ’ (visible collapse of author) ; ‘ well, I mean not a copy over the first eight hundred. Those little things are what matter in a book. You want to hit the tide exactly and use every ounce of it.’

At first, when he hears these home-truths, the author’s feeling is one of acute depression and humiliation. But if he is wise, he will soon recover himself, and get a sense of proportion. After all, it cuts both ways. Such a hard view of our *magna opera* may hurt us in our moments of rosy success, but when

disappointment comes, as come it will, what a comforter it may prove, what a soother of wounded feelings ! ‘ Oh, the book was right enough, one of the very best of this century ; but those idiots Blanker and Beetle brought it out at the very worst moment possible. Not only were there a Ministerial Crisis and a General Election on at the unhappy moment they chose, but also the great Malreward Divorce case. It involved the question of the comparative credibility of housemaids and house surgeons. The public, wild, cultured, civilized, and barbaric, thought and talked of nothing else for six weeks, and, when they could attend to things again, my work was stale and the book of the hour was *The Psychology of the Maiden Aunt*.’ So you console yourself it was just rank bad luck, and very possibly a kind friend will endorse your self-help by declaring that it may prove a capital nest-egg for your wife. ‘ A really good thing like that can’t die. Mark my words, if a new edition is brought out, say a month after the obituaries, it will become a best-seller in a second edition. The thing has happened before, I assure you. You see, the stuff ’s really there. It only wants proper marketing. So cheer up and keep always in mind what obituaries like yours will be can do to brisk up sales.’

But what am I saying and where have I wandered while the Municipio has all this time been waiting on the mat ? What a tragedy ! But the truth is I don’t feel strong enough this morning to tackle the Municipio. I should not do it the peculiar justice it demands. Besides, it deserves an entry all to itself. Excuses ! Rank excuses ! Well, if you must know, the English post will be in in five or ten minutes, and that means *The Times* every day, and on Tuesdays, *i.e.* to-day, *The Spectator* is also expected. *The Spec-*

*tator* is bound to be a source of pleasure to me on a holiday. If it is a poor number, I can strut about and say, 'Ah, well, I think we do better than that when I'm there. After all, there is something in the reckless courage of a vital old age.' On the other hand, if it is a good number, as I candidly admit it usually is when I am away, one has an equally pleasant sensation—'They manage perfectly well without me. I really need not fuss about my holidays being too long. Another month would not matter in the very least, and this would give me either two travel holidays a year, or else an extra quiet hermit's month in which I could write my long promised play, "Her Fighting Soul," or else compose that film scenario, "Victims of Virtue." No, I need not be rationed as to holidays when this is the result.'

19th August. *More Villas.*—As a postscript to the account of the Villa Balbi, I ought to add that there is another villa, not in the town, but a mile outside, which is quite twice as big as the Balbi or twice as big as Seaford House. It stands close to the edge of the Post Road, but it has attached to it quite a big park surrounded by a high, stout, roughcasted wall. The park must be at least a hundred acres, and is full of big trees. The house would be a big country house in England or Scotland, and is quite 'a place.' Here no one seems to notice it, though it is well kept up. I could not find out its name or who owned it. All I could learn was that it belonged to what an old lady at Arco once described to me as 'a rich particular'; not a bad attempt at *un particulier riche*. I tried to count the windows and to compute the number of housemaids required, but my heart failed me. I can't think in housemaids above eight. After that the numbers mean no more to me than a thousand millions



sterling does to the plain citizen with a hundred pounds overdraft! If, however, any one is great-hearted enough to set his mind at work on the housemaid problem in Italian palaces and villas, let him consider the Vatican. In that palace there are eleven thousand rooms. Let us say that each housemaid can tackle eleven rooms. Then a thousand housemaids would be required for the Papal establishment. The mind reels at the thought of this holy regiment of women! How are they organized? Is there a Cardinal of the Housemaids, I wonder? If there is, I pity him. Fancy arranging their Sundays out!!!

### THE MUNICIPIO AT LAST

*20th August 1923.*—If I could describe, or rather transfer to the written and printed page, the heart-catch exercised by the Municipio on my mind, I should have solved the problem of Architecture and how and why it is one of the most emotional of all the arts, and leads you with so sure a hand in exaltation and surprise through the vast and shining Halls of the Spirit. But though I have not the requisite strength of soul, I shall not be able to find rest till I have said something as to what I feel about the little Palazzo in the main street of Sestri Levante. In one way the thing is too small and obscure and uninspired to make a fuss over or write home about. If, while I am thrilling over it, Smithson were to appear on the scene and to slap me on the back with a ‘Hullo, old chap! what means this tumult in a vestal’s veins?’ or use any other of his canned witticisms—excellent quality I admit, but still preserved provisions—I don’t know what I should be able to say in answer. Probably the best I could do would be to say, ‘I will tell

you when you can tell me why I am so tremendously moved by so simple a piece of rhetoric as

‘For ever and for ever, farewell, Brutus!’

Then I will tell you why the Municipio gets me.’

More evasions? Very well, here goes, at any rate, for a catalogue of the qualities that have moved me so strongly. First of all, its charm is its amazing simplicity and directness. It pierces your heart like Wordsworth’s Lucy or his ‘Extempore Effusion’ on the death of Charles Lamb. Yet remember it is not the simpering simplicity of the Malmaison Rococo or the austere simplicity of the best age. It is neither the child’s gentleness, nor the scholar’s, nor the well-bred coquette’s—‘affecting to be unaffected.’ It is the innocence of the pure in heart. There is no mixed motive in it. The designer wanted to build for a member of a respected, nay, noted Genoese family a Palazzo which should be at once beautiful, appropriate, and useful. He kept that ideal before him. He did not try to show off, or to shove his architectural link full in your face, or to make you want to have ‘another just like it,’ or to get the look of a big house into a small, or the reverse. He just built on till he finished and felt satisfied.

The site allowed a front on two good streets, but gave no room for a ‘Cortile.’ There is a simple door in each front with little or no ornament, but great charm in the proportions. The sort of big corridor which is thus formed between the two front doors is, I suppose, about forty by twenty by fifteen feet. It has the appearance of a small hall. In the middle of the east wall is an arch, showing the first steps of the most perfect *small* ‘grand staircase’ I have ever seen. The broad steps—about six feet long—are black slate. The balustrade, light and yet strong, was once

white Carrara marble, now the shade of a very, very faint, faded and dusty apricot. The marble columns at each turn of the stairs—there are two flights to reach each landing—are Tuscan Doric, and the staircase goes to the top of the house. The rooms on either side are quite plain as far as masonry goes, though no doubt they were originally painted throughout. I had nearly forgotten the exquisite mouldings in what I have called the hall. The coving is most delicately and attractively accomplished and its outlines well, though not obtrusively, marked. There are no pillars or pilasters, but the vaulting springs from mouldings which just suggest the heads of sublimated Tuscan columns in very low relief, and then fade, or rather flow, away into the walls. They affect one like the notes of a low but perfectly modulated flute played a little way off by an enchanted shepherd boy. That is all; absolutely all there is to be said about the Palazzo—except for the exquisite quality of the white plastering of walls and ceiling—and yet it stands for me as Perfection in the Architecture of Simplicity.

And the miracle of the thing is that no one made any fuss about it when it was built, any more than they do now, or ever will do. No guide-book mentions it. It is and will remain unknown to the tourist for all time. Not that they would dislike it. They could not help liking it. It is, however, an essential part of its charm not to demand violent attention any more than a violet in a hedge.

### THE BARCA

*27th August 1923.*—Sestri Levante is in the summer essentially a bathing-place. There resort many well-to-do Italian families of the old nobility. It is not so

fashionable as the Lido, nor so popular as Viareggio (a kind of Brighton and Margate mixed), but a 'good form' watering-place. Certainly the said families seem very nice and are very good to look at. The children are divine, and the grown-up young people friendly, good-tempered, unselfconscious and excellent swimmers. One gets, in fact, a delightful sense of Italian family life. The papas and mammas may incline to stoutness, but it does not prevent the former from taking back-somersault headers off a twenty-foot pierhead!

Now the chief fact about the bathing life and organization is the *Barca*. She dominates it. The *Barca* is the queen of the bathing part of the Bay. We left her so when we were here ten years ago, and we find her as firm in her place as ever, now we are back again. She is moored at the end of the short little pier in deep water, and a rope of about fifty or sixty yards long attaches her to the pierhead and enables timid swimmers to reach her as by a rail. She is a country craft, painted outside white and green with a line of black, and a kind of deep and salmon pink inside. Her figure is not unlike that of the Lady in Congreve's poem:

‘Of size she is not tall or short,  
And doth to fat incline  
Only in what the French do call  
*Aimable en-bon-point.*’

That is a polite way of saying she is tubby. Her beam is about half her length and her prow and stern are both rounded. She has a long mast, a good deal aslant, and a long boom braced up to about four or five feet above the taffrail. She is not decked, but has very easily sloping sides so that she resembles a very large open rowing-boat, and there is room in her

for plenty of bathers to sit in the sun and gossip, and dry off, and take headers off her sides or off the little wooden staircase which conducts to her bulwarks. She is a most comfortable place to sit about in, and often has twenty or thirty bathers perched in her, taking their amphibious ease. And a very beautiful picture they make—the young men like bronze statues with their tight-fitting white caps and the girls with handkerchiefs on their heads all the colours of the rainbow. Thus to bathers and spectators on the shore she, the *Barca*, is always the centre of attraction. Every one automatically makes for the *Barca* directly after he or she has taken to the water and made the first plunge.

The *Barca*, like all ladies and most ships, has a special character, and in her case a very odd one. When we were last here she suddenly disappeared. The bathers were in despair. She went off in the night as ladies of her kind always do. What was to be done? The bathing was spoiled. The glory of Sestri Levante had departed.

I joined in a kind of informal deputation to the Innkeeper to ask what had happened and to demand her instant recall and restoration. And then we made a most amazing discovery. Apparently she did not, as we had presumed, belong to the Hotel. Our host spoke in a perfectly detached way about her. He was sorry, but it was obvious he did not feel the slightest responsibility, only a kind of historic interest. He could, at any rate, throw no light on the situation. At the end of the interview, however, he suddenly dropped into a kind of pensive, almost aloof tone, and uttered, as if thinking aloud, the following oracular remark, 'They were saying that she has already gone to Elba.' Gone to Elba! Then we were indeed undone. She could not possibly be back till we had

left. We had seen the last of the *Barca*, and the bathing had lost all its poetry and romance. But the end was not yet. That very afternoon I happened to take a boat and prowled about the Harbour, looking at the strange local craft—all green, and gold, and blue, and black. There was one biggish ship lying at her moorings, a tramp steamer out of Leghorn or Naples. She towered up like a leviathan among minnows. For some strange whim I insisted on rowing round her, and there lurking like a thief was the *Barca*. She had struck her mast and adopted one or two other ‘stagey’ and conventional disguises, but there was no mistaking her. It was the *Barca* all right, though in blue spectacles, passing locally, no doubt, under some such name as the ‘Angelica Mortuomare.’

I was greatly moved, rowed home, and burst into the Bureau, and flushed with excitement announced that I had found the *Barca*. She hadn’t gone to Elba, was in no fit state to go there, but was lying in compromising, not to say disreputable, circumstances, in a corner of the Harbour. ‘Can’t you,’ I exclaimed, ‘get her back and give hope once more to us bathers?’ or words to that effect. The gentlemen of the Bureau said little, but they exchanged glances as if to say, ‘Well I never! The cunning old thing! How like her! How disgraceful!’ To me, however, the Chief only said with what Herman Melville calls ‘the vague reserve of Heaven,’ ‘Perhaps, then, she will be back to-morrow. I shall see; but certainly Wednesday morning.’ Actually it was Wednesday afternoon. By the time the Hotel lunch was over she was back, just as if nothing had happened, and the guests who were not in the know only said, ‘She must be a wonderfully quick sailer to do Elba and back under a week.’ But I who knew seemed to catch a sort of

defiant tone in her roll—‘ Well, what about it ? What if I did ? Have you never had a spree ? ’ That was what I learned from her bobbing up and down and her sideways lurch in the water.

So much for 1913. But the singular thing was that there was just such another episode in 1923. The spree habit had survived the Great War. It happened that a day or two after we arrived this year there was a Regatta with illuminations and fireworks—quite charming these—but on the race day the *Barca* was gone, and no trace. Persons who prided themselves on their wit jestingly declared she had entered for one of the sailing races and was being got up to win in a neighbouring cove. But, of course, that could not be !

The Regatta was a curious water frolic and difficult to follow. At first all sorts of boats and small yachts rushed up and down the harbour at full tilt and seemed quite proud of remaining unrammed by each other. Then without any particular signal all the craft of all sorts and sizes gathered at about two miles out in the Bay and there remained in a sort of rocking bunch or ‘ grumous mass.’ Boats darted in and out continually, but the swarm of small vessels and boats remained locked in a kind of fast embrace. There was a good deal of movement within the swarm, but chiefly of a circulatory kind. The only thing I could compare it with was the Caucus Race in *Alice in Wonderland*. There everybody ran about till they were too tired to go on.

Suddenly at about five the mass broke up and everybody hurried home and tied up at the quay or cast down their little anchors and began to get ready for the illuminations and ‘ Procession of Decorated Boats ’ timed for eight. As yet no sign of the *Barca*. The Procession was like the race. There was no order

of any kind, but only a vague tumultuary movement. At last, however, we saw Chinese lanterns being lighted in great numbers. Then out of the illuminated darkness three stout vessels lurched very slowly forward. As they rolled towards us in a kind of wavy zigzag we saw to our consternation that the middle one was the *Barca*, got up like a sort of Blousy Bride of the Ocean. She was literally crammed full of people, most of them musicians, and they made a noise mighty even for an Italian popular Festa. There were abundant signs of food and drink on board in act of consumption, and the mast was fairly straight, but the boom and every other place was covered with highly-coloured lanterns. As she proceeded on her way, she pitched and rolled and showed her fat sides. She was deep down in the water, for she had seventy people aboard if she had one. Looking at her, it was difficult to believe that she was not in liquor, so untidy and dishevelled and bedevilled did she appear. I had never before turned away in shame from an inanimate object. The illusion of a woman, whom you knew and rather liked, making a hopeless exhibition of herself on the Marine Parade at Brighton was so strong that one had to punch oneself to get rid of it. The old tub was so crowded that she looked like the mediaeval picture of 'Ye Shippe of Fooles.' Further, she was towed forward by a wretched sweating little row-boat. The thing looked like Falstaff being led up Cheapside by his tiny page. But happily the incident did not last long. It was soon drowned in the fireworks. Next day, however, the illusion was maintained in a most uncanny way. All one day she lay just off her right position, utterly dismantled. She seemed to have lost all her belongings as well as places. The next day a fisherman and his mate took nearly all day to



get her back into her proper position. We watched the proceeding with hot cheeks. It can only be described as a flagrant example of what funny people mean when they talk about 'the morning after the night before.' Truly it was a piteous spectacle. I am sure, however, that if after another ten years I revisit Sestri the *Barca* will be there and at her old games. That sort of creature never really reforms and settles down or gives it up 'once and for all.' It is always too late for them to repent. Like Falstaff again, they haven't the strength to repent !

28th August. *The Barca once more.*—I have just seen a certain Mr. Jones-James, who, it appears, is a Neo-Platonist who has built a villa at the edge of the desert near Alexandria and has adopted, he says, 'a considerable portion of the Gnostic Faith.' He insists that inanimate things frequently, perhaps always, have souls—the Earth has a soul—and there is no reason why the *Barca* should not be so possessed !

If she is, I am sure of one thing. It is not Helen of Troy, or Cleopatra, or even Moll Flanders, or Doll Tearsheet who is in charge. It must be good old leery, liquorish, but kindly Mrs. Quickly, if it is any one. She would quite naturally have taken to the *Barca* if condemned for her peccadilloes to inhabit a material thing.

## THE APENNINES

28th August 1923.—Here we are where I have often wanted to be—not merely looking at the Apennines, or just brushing the dust off their august feet, but right in the heart of them, *i.e.* four thousand four

hundred feet up at the top of the ancient pass between Modena and Lucca, *i.e.* at Abetone. It is a sample of all Italy, or rather of all one-half of Italy, for the whole land can but afford the Mountains and the Plains—the Apennines, the valleys of the Po and its affluents, and of such small imitators as the Tiber, the Anio, and the rest plus the narrow strips of coast on either side of the mountain Peninsula. To say this means that one must never forget that Italy is a mountain country and at least half its inhabitants are hill-men. And the Apennines run from the very top of Italy, *i.e.* from the place where they join the Maritime Alps to the heel and toe of the Peninsula. They are arid, but taken altogether they can furnish an enormous amount of that white-coal (water power) which is destined to be the new industrial force; the force which will make our wheels turn. And a blessed force. It does not defile the air or the land. It may even beautify them by its exploitation. Artificial lakes high in the hills need not be ugly, and may be magnificent. It carries away its own waste-product and may serve a city's thirst after it has lighted it or given it power. So the Apennines are worth thinking about and getting a close acquaintance with by any one who wants to know not only about the land of all the enchantments, but about the land that is destined perhaps to play one of the greatest parts in the restoration of the world.

Besides they, the Apennines, are worth perpetually thinking about and writing about, 'on account of their extreme beauty'—as the schoolboy said when asked 'Why were Ablatives retained in Latin though dropped in Greek?'

## ON THE ROAD TO SIENA

‘Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallambrosa, where the Etrurian shades  
High overarched embower. . . .’

(MILTON.)

‘We too among the Apennines  
Have found Etrurian shades;  
Seen Abetone’s lordly pines,  
Marcello’s chestnut glades.’  
(Prize Poem: ‘*Italy*,’ circa 1847.)

1st September 1923.—To-day by a cross-cut road over various spurs of the Apennines we motored from Abetone *via* Florence to Siena. It is a journey well worth taking for itself and even without so delectable an objective as Siena. (*Viva La Lupa*.) It is all Italy in a compendium, or, to put it in another way, it is like a very ample first sketch for a frontispiece to Turner’s Illustrations to Rogers’s *Italy*. The villages, towns, castles, villas, churches, and monasteries crowned the hilltops and crags just as they ought to have crowned them to please an artist on the look-out for ‘copy,’ and everywhere the Stone-Pines, the Chestnuts, the Beeches, the Rocks, the Torrents, and the Ravines were properly bestowed. This sounds like the ironic touch, but it is not so meant. One was sincerely grateful to the landscape for being so exactly up to sample when the sample was anything so pleasant as Turner’s Vignettes. As, however, Turner and Rogers have said it all first, and so well, I shall be silent. ‘When the nightingale sings, the crow is not heard’—(Persian proverb). I shall, however, have to make one addition to my previous note of admiration, nay amazement, as to the size of Italian villas. As we ran down the steep zigzags on the side of the mountain under which Pistoja shelters herself,

I saw on our left, about five miles away, perched on an isolated but low spur of the hills, a huge building which literally sprawled across the landscape. Sprawl is, however, from some points of view an unfitting word, for there was nothing ugly or disagreeable in the building. Indeed, it suggested taste, proportion, and that peculiar touch of comeliness which the rural architects of Italy have always known how to bestow. I was so greatly struck by the vast size of the building that, though I thought it seemed civil, not ecclesiastical, I asked our chauffeur in my worst Italian whether it was a convent. 'Oh no,' he replied, 'it is only a house—*una villa*.' I went on to ask its name, expecting to be told that the Grand Duke of Tuscany had built it in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Instead, the motor man dismissed it as nothing of any importance. He couldn't for the moment remember what it was called, but it was just a villa, an ordinary private villa. When I went on to ask what was the name of the owner, he could not recall it. And yet it was apparently very much bigger than Wellington Barracks! It was also in excellent repair and had every sign of use and prosperity. It was quite impossible to talk of it, *à la* Ruskin, as spreading 'in white ruin from hillside to hillside.' It was as little ruinous as the Bank of England. So I had to fall back upon my old system of computation and once more wildly endeavour to think in housemaids: 'If at Lambeth, as I have heard, they cannot "manage" without eight housemaids, how many would they want here?' I supposed about twenty-four. But what is the use of talking about twenty-four housemaids? To the ordinary man or woman the words are quite meaningless. Personally I should take to the woods when I passed the datum line of eight. What a dreadful subject for a nightmare is suggested! The dreamer would

be trying to hunt down the twenty-fourth housemaid through vast and echoing registry offices fitted up in the Vatican or Fontainebleau with endless clerks sitting at desks and typing out 'particulars of your exact requirements, please; did you say eighty bedrooms and twenty sitting-rooms and one bathroom on the first floor, or was it two in the basement or in the attic? And did I rightly understand no hot water except in the kitchen?'

And then the scene would suddenly change and the hunter becomes the hunted. Twelve couples of househounds (Lady Pack) in caps and aprons would in full cry pursue the dreamer through a vast Italian villa. She would dodge and dive frantically to escape from the hunt, but as she threw them off at the base of the Great Staircase and began to hope, she would meet them coming noses down out of the Loggia on the Piano Nobile or in the narrow corridors of the Mezzanine. But why go on worrying myself with other men or women's woes? Capital Levy or no, I shall never get beyond 'the two housemaid line,' and perhaps not be able even to maintain that modest maximum.

But though that vast villa on the mountain side haunted me for a mile or more and seemed as if it might stretch out to the crack of doom, a turn in the road at last took it from my harried vision, and in a few minutes we had stayed the wheels at Pistoja and were not considering abstract household problems or making weird calculations in housemaids, but debating the important and immediate question whether to lunch early where we were, or late at Florence. Florence had it.

## SIENA

*9th September 1923.*—We have been at Siena nearly a week, but as I am not writing ‘Memorials of an Italian Holiday,’ nor a guide-book, nor anything approaching thereto, I shall say little or nothing about this glorious testament in brick, stone, and paint to the best side of Mediaeval Italy. This Diary for good or bad is a spasmodic record of the thoughts, emotions, intuitions, fancies, ergotisms, guesses, conclusions and inconclusions that pass across a human mind. As I do not wish to appear to be suffering from an inferiority complex, I am not going to apologize for making so much of a pother about my self and my feelings. No man need ever apologize for putting as much of himself as he can on record. To let one’s pen run away with one is a duty for any one able to accomplish that difficult task in mental equitation. To float for a little on the River of Life—if I may change my metaphor—and to note the currents, eddies, and rapids rather than to be wholly absorbed in the labour of the oar is well worth while. I take pen in hand to show the working of my own brain, not to describe material things or to analyse other men’s natures. These have their place, no doubt, in a daily digression and in the log of a boat on the River of Life, but only indirectly and by way of background. In any case Siena is a precious vintage and needs no bush. I shall carry with me as long as I live the picture of Guidoriccio dei Fogliani in the great hall of the Palazzo Comunale. There are two great castles, a camp, and two lines of stockade in the picture. But of living things none, except ‘The Captain of the Wars’ and his horse caparisoned

in brownish trappings ornamented with diamond-shaped pieces of green and black cloth. The greatness of the deed could not have been more potently suggested. The mighty soldier rode out absolutely alone, summoned the enemy's castle to surrender, and received it. 'Alone he did it' has never been said with greater truth.

## FAREWELL TO ITALY

11th September 1923.—We have just left Genoa, and so I must say farewell to Italy. I am not superstitious, or weighed down by any premonition, but I am caught by the perfectly rational inquiry, 'I wonder whether I shall ever see Italy again?' In all probability I shall, for I like to take holidays abroad, and my first choice is always Italy. Still, without any gloomy assumptions as to 'the life of the writer being short and precarious' and so forth, I can think of a hundred reasons why I may never be able to get to Italy again. For example, I want to go to India, to Rio, to the Cape, to America, to the West Indies, to Madeira, to Egypt, to Palestine, to Greece, to Australia and New Zealand, to Constantinople, to Denmark, to Finland, to Russia, to Sweden, to the North Cape, to Vienna, to Prague, to the High Alps, and to Poland. And I only take one holiday a year and am sixty-four. Therefore, though I am an optimist, I can hardly expect more than twenty years of travel. On these grounds, it is not unreasonable to think it possible that I have in fact said Good-bye to Italy. In truth, my mood is exactly expressed by the enchanting lines in *Julius Caesar* in which Brutus and Cassius

take leave of each other just before the Battle of Philippi :

- ‘*Brutus*. And whether we shall meet again I know not.  
 Therefore our everlasting farewell take :  
 For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius !  
 If we do meet again, why, we shall smile ;  
 If not, why then, this parting was well made.
- ‘*Cassius*. For ever, and for ever, farewell, Brutus !  
 If we do meet again, we ’ll smile indeed ;  
 If not, ’tis true this parting was well made.’

And then follows from Brutus the inimitable heart-cry of the man before action :

‘ . . . O, that a man might know  
 The end of this day’s business ere it come !  
 But it sufficeth that the day will end,  
 And then the end is known.’

‘ For ever and for ever,’ then farewell, Italy ! I shall certainly smile when we do meet again, and if we do not, well then this parting was well made. There will be no one to smile and no one to say, ‘ You were right.’

How exquisitely the words ‘ For ever and for ever ’ fall on the ear. Had any one, I wonder, used them just in that way before ? The translators of the Bible came, of course, very near, but there is not the same liquid cadence in ‘ For ever and ever.’ It just misses the honied accent.

It is curious to remember that Pope pounced on the lines in *Julius Caesar* and made them the key phrase in the key couplet of the most inspired piece of Society verse in all literature—*The Rape of the Lock* :

‘ The Peer now spreads the glittering forefex wide  
 To enclose the Lock, now joins it to divide ;  
 The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever,  
 From the fair head for ever and for ever.’



But this was by no means the only occasion on which Pope took a metrical hint from Shakespeare. Every one knows the lines summarizing certain female types in the *Epistle on the Characters of Women* :

‘ Or her that owns her faults but never mends,  
Because she ’s honest, and the best of friends :  
Or her whose life the church and scandal share,  
For ever in a passion or a prayer :  
Or her who laughs at hell, but (like her grace)  
Cries, ‘ Ah ! how charming if there ’s no such place !  
Or who in sweet vicissitude appears  
Of mirth and opium, ratafie and tears ;  
The daily anodyne and nightly draught,  
To kill those foes to fair ones, time and thought.’

That this is an excellent mould into which to run shorthand criticism will be allowed at once by any one who has ever tried this type of gnomic verse. But Shakespeare had it first, as is proved by these lines from *Othello* put into the mouth of Iago :

‘ She that was ever fair, and never proud ;  
Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud ;  
Never lack’d gold, and yet went never gay ;  
Fled from her wish, and yet said—*Now I may*,  
She that, being anger’d, her revenge being nigh,  
Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly ;  
She that in wisdom never was so frail,  
To change the cod’s head for the salmon’s tail ;  
She that could think, and ne’er disclose her mind,  
See suitors following, and not look behind ;  
She was a wight, if ever such wights were,  
To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.’

While I am dealing with Pope’s ingenious borrowings I may note another on which I stumbled the other day. Pope wrote and Bononcini set to alluring music the lines in the *Eclogues* :

‘ Where’er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade,  
Trees where you sit shall crowd into a shade.’

Now turn to your *Hudibras*, and in one of the few verses meant to be beautiful in the poem you will read :

‘Where’er you walk your foot shall set  
The primrose and the violet.’

People who steal as cleverly as Pope deserve in truth not censure but our heartiest thanks.

I expect there are lots more ‘steals’ in Pope, especially from Shakespeare. ‘If I were younger I were bolder,’ and I would try and find more. As it is, I must be content to make the suggestion to the intrepid scholars of the new age. It will be an amusing hunt and, I expect, will lead to many pleasant kills. The *Dunciad* is good covert to draw, and so are *The Temple of Fame* and the *Eloisa and Abelard*. I have no exquisite reason for it, but yet I somehow think reason enough to hold that the great line, ‘The shrines all trembled and the lights burnt low,’ is a crib, but from whom I know not, though I vaguely hazard Dryden, or Rowe, or Otway.

#### A PROBLEM IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

20th September 1923.—My granddaughter of five is as ingenious and as ingenuous as she is beautiful in looks and engaging in manners. To-day she ambushed me with a most attractive suggestion. The conversation turned on Toast, and I idly repeated the old rhyme about how some one says :

‘Did you ever see the Ghostesses  
A-sitting on the Postesses  
A-eating of buttered Toastesses ?’

‘What are Ghostesses ?’ asked Susan. I knew at once that I was in for trouble. I ought not to have

talked about Ghosts. It is a barred subject for fear of terrors 'on the stairs and in the dark' and general folly and confusion. All I could do was to say that I didn't exactly know, but that anyway they were very nice and particularly kind to little children, to whom indeed it was their invariable custom to offer hot buttered toast. I tried a side-issue here and dwelt with unctuous, not to say sodden, greediness on the deliciousness of the bottom pieces. Susan was tactful and polite, but I could see she perfectly realized my embarrassment and my pitiable effort to hide it. Fortunately for me, however, she had got an idea of her own which she much wanted to work off. Therefore she did not expose me. When I lamely paused, she said largely, 'Are they Ghosts' wives?' I leapt at the idea as a man in a burning house leaps to catch a rope. Yes, I was sure they were; just as Duchesses are the wives of Dukes and Lionesses of Lions, so Ghostesses are the wives of Ghosts. Thus all ended well and was well. No 'phobias' were sown or reaped, and we all felt comfortable.

All the same, Susan's suggestion rang in my head. After all, it was a very sensible one. Postulate Ghosts and you naturally get females of the same nature, *i.e.* Ghostesses, or wives of Ghosts. But if Ghosts have wives, what, one may well ask, are the relations between the ladies and gentlemen in question? Do the Ghosts and Ghostesses behave like husbands and wives all the world over? Do the Ghosts strut about and pretend to a large mastery, 'I will and must be master in this house, haunted or unhaunted, furnished or empty'—well knowing all the time that they can't move without an endorsed decision. Again, do the Ghosts' wives say to their lords, 'Do you realize what time it is? It's ten minutes to twelve already and you are due at a haunt

in Yorkshire at five minutes to midnight. It's there you have to say, "The hour has all but struck and I can answer nothing now." If you are late again, there is certain to be a row. And then remember the Psychical Society-Puzzler said he was most anxious you should do some Pottergeist stunts in Devonshire to-night.' And then does the Ghost reply, 'Do please stop fussing. I've plenty of time. At least, I should have had if you hadn't kept me here arguing. Where's that wretched housemaid hidden my helmet and gauntlets? I put them in my dressing-room!' 'Nonsense!' Of course, I didn't.' 'Well, I shall go without them unless—Oh, here they are. Sorry, good-bye—back one-thirty.' Again, does his wife say to the Poudré Ghost (Sir Joshua's portrait shows him in peach-coloured velvet), 'You really must have this coat seen to. It's positively in rags, and not even clean rags. It looks simply sordid. I've reminded you about it again and again and told old Perkins, but neither you nor he ever notice anything'—and so on and so on? Well, I wonder? What a question for Sir Thomas Browne. He loved such homely and intimate problems. Needless to say, however, I did not approach Susan with them. If I had, she might easily have fixed a pair of gimlet eyes on me—celestial gimlets made of the brightest and bluest steel—and asked, 'Do they talk like that to you, Grandpapa?' and what should I have said then? However, I am distinctly one up on the transaction. I have got a new definition, and a new definition is like a new diamond. '*Ghostesses*, wives of Ghosts; obsolete, except in Dialect, Yorkshire, Somerset, and parts of Glamorgan.' That would look well in a dictionary.

## LIMERICKS

4th October 1923.—I have been interested in limericks, and especially the Lear variety, all my life. Of late what have fascinated me most have been the metaphysical limericks. The following limerick by Father Ronald Knox is in my opinion one of the best ever written :

‘ There was a young man who said “ Damn !  
I clearly perceive that I am  
Predestined to move  
In a circumscribed groove,  
In fact, not a bus, but a tram.” ’

Another metaphysical example, written by a friend, is pure nonsense, but delightful nonsense :

‘ There was a young man of Cadiz,  
Who inferred that life is what it is,  
For he early had learnt,  
If it were what it weren’t,  
It could not be that which it is.’

My only serious contribution to limericks is, I fear, hardly worthy of insertion. It is also of the metaphysical kind :

‘ There was an old man who said “ Motion,”  
A state of, ’s a comical notion.  
It would seem to connote,  
That a single U-boat  
Could be at two spots on the ocean.’

Here is another metaphysical example by Father Ronald Knox. It is beyond praise for its compression :

‘ There was a young man who said God  
Must think it excessively odd  
That this sycamore tree  
Just ceases to be  
When there ’s no one about in the Quad.’

## GREAT BOOKS

10th October 1923.—It has been said, and as I think most truly, that great men are commoner than great books. Great authors almost always show certain weaknesses in parts of their work, and therefore their works are, taken as a whole, patchy. Almost the only author absolute in her perfection throughout her literary achievement that I can think of is Jane Austen.

A book which can claim the honour of being ranked among the great books of the world must be good throughout, good in the whole, good in the part, good in general structure, good in details. It must maintain a constancy of achievement found seldom in the arts. In the sense in which I am using the phrase I do not mean by a great book an ennobling book, or necessarily a book with the highest qualities of human genius. I mean a book which, whatever its aim, high or low, grave or gay, satirical or instructive, critical or creative, exactly accomplished the aim of its author. It is a book which never fails in its aim. It hits the bull's eye at every discharge.

One of the books that attain pre-eminently this intense, if limited, perfection is Swift's *Tale of a Tub*. It is not only a great but a terrible book, a book which we must honour, but which we cannot like, a book which leaves us not happy or re-established in mind and purpose and eager for better things, but full of perplexity and shame. It shows us things in the human mind which we would rather not see. It tells us of that of which we should all prefer to remain ignorant. Let no one imagine that I am repeating the commonplace criticism of Swift for his nastiness, for his mere obscenities and derogations from those

decencies which protect us from physical nausea in literature as in life. I am thinking of something quite different, of the appalling inhumanity of the man's mind and of that quality which made the trembling Vanessa give forth her agonized cry, ' Surely no man ever thought like you.'

The *Tale of a Tub* is one of the great books of the world. That is a proposition which cannot be challenged. We are amazed as well as appalled by the frightful energy and concentration which marks its every page. It boils like a witch's cauldron. We shrink soul-smitten, though we say with Swift himself, ' Great God, what a genius I had when I wrote that book ! '

## CICERO

16th November 1923.—If men were to be judged by their bedside books, we should, I expect, get some surprises and also a good many shrewd hints as to people's characters. For example, I am the least Ciceronian of men, and yet by a series of accidents there is no book I am more apt to take up for sending myself to sleep than a volume of Cicero's Letters. That sounds terribly priggish, or shall I say terribly scholarly, and yet I am not a scholar and I hope not more of a prig than my fellows. Certainly I am not an admirer of Cicero's character or way of looking at the world. Indeed, I regard him from many points of view as little better than a reactionary humbug. He is, indeed, all I dislike in Politics, Literature, and I had almost said Morals, for his Stoicism is of the cheap, machine-made kind. What I really value in Cicero is the delightfully unconscious humour of the man and his extraordinary power of self-revelation. His Letters are some of the greatest—perhaps the

greatest—of ‘human documents,’ to use an altogether disgusting, worn-out and abominable, though useful phrase. When you read Cicero’s Letters you feel that a very wise old gentleman has taken you by the hand and is dexterously leading you through the political labyrinth which surrounded the inmost and secret shrine of the Roman Republic. The truth is, one may guy Cicero—he is very guyable—and may make all sorts of criticisms of him! But he remains eternally attractive as a writer, and even as a politician. Poor man! he was born out of his due time.

Cicero would have been much happier if he had lived in the unspacious days of Queen Anne and George I. He would have been incredibly comfortable in those sordid but yet intellectual surroundings. There was enough revolution in the air to give him the political interest and excitement which he loved, and never so much as to endanger his position, or to tempt the pious and patriotic politician to be cringing or disingenuous. A periwigged patriotism would have suited him to a ‘T.’ What an exquisite Epistle Pope would have written to him—‘And you, brave Tully, Wisdom’s Saint and Sage.’

But alas for poor Cicero’s happiness! He was born in a terrible age, an age of earthquake and eclipse, the age of Pompey and Caesar, and of their feud of the giants. Cicero longed pathetically for a respectable republic. Yet such was the ignominy of the times that he had to spend the best years of his life skirmishing with such people as Caesar and Pompey, Catiline and Mark Antony, Dolabella and Octavius, Brutus and Cassius, and all the motley and ignoble and yet iron-hearted and granite-fisted crew that thronged the Forum and caught the World’s great hands. He had even to endure the supreme humiliation of seeing dark and venal ladies and other ‘designing females’



like Cleopatra upsetting his schemes. He liked a touch of political intrigue with 'the sex' well enough, but it must not be pushed too far. It must be conducted with decency and decorum, and without bloodshed or super-scandal, or at any rate with the very minimum of such nasty things.

To a man of this kind the political atmosphere prevailing practically during his whole life was a long martyrdom. He was always having to make compromises between principles and safety, and loathing himself for doing so. By the way, how the motto 'Safety First' confronting him on every bus would have wrung Cicero's heart had he lived in these days! It was on that principle that he almost always acted in politics. Yet his whole life was a pretence that he did nothing of the kind. His inner maxim was, 'Never do an ignoble or unpatriotic act unless it is positively necessary, and even then howl about it if you dare.' Nevertheless, he hated hedging and playing for safety, and having to be sly, cautious, and cynical. The force of circumstances would not even allow him to stand neutral. He would have been willing to be neutral on a moral issue, to borrow a famous phrase from our own age, but he could not even attain to this ambiguous refuge.

In one of his letters to Atticus he brings this out with great poignancy. Atticus, after the way of the 'hard-shell' business friend when he writes to a politician, advised him to keep clear of embarrassments and not to commit himself too much to either side, and so forth and so on. Cicero wails back in effect, 'What is the use of this talk about not committing oneself? You forget there are only two lobbies, and I have got to be in one of them. When the Quæstor says, Marcus Tullius, which way do you vote? I am done. I can't scuttle out or abstain.

I am "for it" one way or the other. I must, however much I dislike it, come out in my true, or at any rate in some, colours. To sit perpetually on the fence would merely be to make myself hated by both sides, or lose all my influence and my position. In fact, I should commit political suicide. It is a horrible position for me, and you don't help me a bit.' And so poor Tullius toils on, letting other people down, or moaning over the way in which they let him down, never quite severing himself from any one, and therefore never really enjoying the confidence of any one.

Yet, curiously enough, such was the admiration Cicero inspired amongst cultivated and responsible Romans that even in those days so full of death, dread, and disaster he would almost certainly have lived, if power had not passed for a certain time into the hands of so brutal a savage as Mark Antony. Caesar, with his coolness of mind and temperate cynicism, took the exact measure of Cicero, and had evidently decided to spare him whatever happened as a kind of museum specimen: 'One of our old-time moralists: useful if absurd.' Pompey, had he won, though apparently he had no great use for Cicero, would never have punished him for 'hedging off a bit' and reducing his liabilities on the Caesarian side. And Octavius, if he had had his own way, would almost certainly have saved Cicero and would no doubt have used him as he used Horace and Virgil. We can well believe that if Cicero had not been hacked to pieces by Antony's bravoës, as might easily have happened if he had been a little more prompt and skilful at getting away, he would have been allowed by the Divus Augustus to go for a short period of exile to Spain or Athens or the Province. When he came back he would have helped the astute Medicean *bourgeois* autocrat, not of Tuscany but of all the

world, to place the empire on a basis of respectable logic with a dash of reasonable religion, the whole refreshed with a sound agricultural and commercial policy—'More crops and less conquests.' We can imagine that Cicero's last two books, *De Rusticis* and *De Imperio*, would have been most edifying and would have justified the ways of the Emperor to mankind in a manner which would have enchanted all peoples that do dwell in the world of letters down to this present.

## CICERO'S LETTERS

17th November 1923.—It is difficult, when one writes about Cicero, not to be a little scornful, and I see on reading over my last entry that I was all that, and something more. I am sorry and I regret my ill-temper. Though obviously a very easy way of treating him, it was a poor way, and a poor recompense for all the delight the letters have given me. Cicero's faults were all on the surface, and, owing to his intense respectability and virtuousness, he is the least difficult man to quiz who ever lived. Yet all the same he was a most lovable man and a man of supreme ability. Nobody can read his books or read a good biography of him without coming under the wand of the enchanter. He was so human and so pleasant and so dignified, always 'so exceedingly nice.'

One likes him even when he is most upset and shocked at the goings-on of his fierce and vulgar relations, for all the time he shows a genuine sense of humour. When he has to tell Atticus how very badly the great banker's sister Pomponia, married to Cicero's brother Quintus, behaved on a certain occasion, you may still see through the words the humorously

pursed-up lips of the old gentleman and the naughty glint of amusement in his furtive eye. He tells with infinite gusto the painful story of the frightful scene she made at the tenants' dinner, of her going to bed and refusing to eat the nice supper sent up to her room, and of how she declared that she had been made a stranger in her own house, meaning, of course, that she intended her husband should be the stranger ! Then Cicero drops a delightful word or two that makes us glow with amusement. As he finishes the story of the row, he interjects to Atticus : '*You will say that it was no great matter. But you should have seen—and heard—your sister.*' That 'heard' shows the real humorist. He is making use of his own reticent, hushed voice to give a comic touch.

Very characteristically, he does not seem to have faced the music himself, but to have kept quite quiet all the time. He wants Atticus, however, to give his sister a good talking to, and thus ends the letter : 'So you may tell Pomponia from me that on that day she did not act like a lady.' She had shown herself lacking in that *humanitas* which was a religion to Cicero. She had made a vulgar scene before her social inferiors—indeed, before the whole village—and that was the unforgivable sin !

### TRANSLATING RACINE

29th November 1923.—The distich habit, like opium, cocaine, whisky, or excessive cigarette smoking, when once adopted, is very difficult to shake off. That is my excuse for entering here two distichs which have been running in my head for a long time and will perhaps be 'laid' by the spell of transcription. They

are attempts to paraphrase certain lines from Racine. But Racine is the most difficult author to translate in the world.

Dryden could have translated *Phèdre* into couplets, and would no doubt have made a tremendous success of such a poetic adventure. The play would have been less fastidious and less detached, and therefore less truly tragic and universal in its appeal than the original and uninterpreted work of 'M. Hippolyte,' as Dryden, perhaps a little jealous, called Racine. But it would have been a noble piece of work, and Dryden would have contrived to get into it some of that humanity and pathos which always dignified his verse. There is nothing chill, or relentless, or ruthless, or remorseless about Dryden. He is a red-blooded man if ever there was one, and, whatever else he was, Racine was not that. One cannot excuse him by saying that he generally dealt with the Classics in his tragedies, and therefore was naturally led to a certain aloofness and inhumanity. He is almost as unnatural when inspired by a modern tragedy, witness *Bajazet*, as he is with *Phèdre* or *Bérénice*. For pure cold-bloodedness there is nothing in the world to equal the Grand Vizier's great apologia for *Etatism* carried to the extremity of perfidy and perjury. Neither Machiavelli nor the philosophic defenders of Prussian statecraft ever went so far as did Racine in this passionate defence of the broken promise, the fraudulent treaty, and the scrap of paper.

Here are my two attempts on Racine :

(*Phèdre* imagines herself before the Judgment-seat of Minos) :

'Constrained my crimes to count, perchance to tell,  
Of deeds as yet unregistered in Hell.'

(Œnone threatens suicide) :

‘A thousand roads lie open night and day.  
To that dread shore, I’ll take the nearest way.’

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I will support these by some examples of distichs culled in my own garden :

#### THE CONVALESCENT

‘Death turned his head and looked at me awhile.  
I shuddered. He passed on. Next time I’ll smile.’

#### THE UNIVERSAL ESCALATOR

‘Some stand at ease ; some on fierce action hurled  
Race up the Moving Staircase of the World.’

#### TO M. TOUT-À-TOUT, PUBLICIST

‘From Cats to Currency, from Kant to Keynes,  
Pours the wild torrent of his turbid brains.’

#### KIND ONLY TO BE CRUEL

‘So kindly pitiless, so madly sane,  
You saw the human soul across the grain.’

#### THE CALL OF THE SNOWS

*20th December 1923.*—The season of the snows is upon us, and many a heart is being moved among those to whom the call of the mountains is potent, nay, imperative. To lie awake in London and think of the bright clear air of the Swiss highlands under the moon or the stars, or the great fields of snow sparkling in the ardent sunshine of midday, produces a sense of nostalgia which is almost agonizing in its intensity. It is strange that a country which has no mountains of its own, or, at any rate, very few that have the true touch in them, should be the home

of the race which, above all others, feels the fascination of the hills.

Let others praise the distant prospect of Monte Rosa or the Matterhorn, the glorious pageant of the Oberland from the Terrace at Berne, or the Valais's depths profound. It wants a man of English breeding to have his blood stirred by the feel of a glacier underneath his feet, to riot and revel in a snow-slope or a rocky arête. Even the Elizabethan poets, who had little or no personal experience of the Alps, seem somehow to have got the true fascination into their veins. For example, Beaumont and Fletcher make the British Warrior Queen speak of 'the untrampled deserts where the snows are.' Who could better this? All the magic of the snow seems to be frozen in eleven syllables. It is exactly this sense of 'untravement' (to use a barbarous phrase), of the mystery, purity, and aloofness of the snow, which so greatly stirs the passions of the mountaineer. Again, Donne, in the wonderful travel-poem addressed to his wife, catches something of the same emotion. Throwing himself into her place he says that when he is away she will wake from her dream, to call aloud :

'I saw him go, o'er the white Alps alone.'

There are literally thousands of English men and women who seem sluggish and unmoved among the ordinary beauties of Nature, and perhaps have no knowledge at all of the beauties of literature. Yet the heart you thought so dull and tame will flutter with a wild delight when the fingers of the dawn spread their enchantments of rose, azure, and jade upon the mountain peaks, or when the gorgeous and jewelled hand of the sunset is colouring some snowy range in saffron and crimson, and when the vault of heaven, against which it is set, has become the

colour of a blue moth's wings, or of that old-fashioned blotting-paper which one adored as a child. The colour could also be found in esoteric sealing-wax.

But, hush, I am losing touch with all the dreary and tragic realities of life—the Tariff, the Referendum, the Ruhr and the Rhineland. If I run on in this way I shall either paralyse myself with longings for the snow which cannot be realized, or else play the truant and have to be chased back by my colleagues and my staff through the rocks and forests of the Grisons. The hunt is up. I can see them hot on my track on the Bernina or up the Stelvio. They just miss me in the Pusterthal or by the red rocks which ring in Cortina. I escape by a miracle at Meran. I can even see the sensational bills and headlines concocted by contemporaries jealous of my freedom who have remained in London: 'TRUANT EDITOR DRAGGED FROM GLACIER CAVE.' 'FIGHTS LIKE A BEAR.' 'DECOYED BY A BOGUS BILL DECLARING LORD ROTHERMERE TO HAVE TURNED TRAPPIST.'

Alas! this winter I can only indulge in dreams of future joys, and find my consolation in the delights of the past—those noble years when we were twenty-one, when the charms of the winter in the Alps had only just been discovered, when the Canadian toboggan had not penetrated to Switzerland, and when the little old-fashioned sledgelet held the field, when skis did not exist in any shape or form, when snowshoes or raquettes were regarded as impossible.

When, in 1883, I went out to spend a winter with my uncle, Mr. John Symonds, the discoverer, for England, at any rate, of winter in the High Alps, I may be said to have stood by the very cradle of Alpine sports. I remember being at a committee held in his library for founding the first International



Toboggan Race, and I remember the grave and eager discussions as to what sort of cup he should present. Those were great and simple days, and they had one charm which, alas! is tending to become wholly obsolete. In those days there were practically no mountain railways and you had to seek your destination in a sledge, most comfortable, most easy, most romantic of all the forms of transport known to man. In my Swiss experiences of forty years ago and more, I think I crossed every high mountain pass kept open in winter, and crossed them, of course, in box-sledges. I cannot remember how many times I crossed the Julier or made the minor passage from Davos to Chur, and again from Davos direct by the Fluela or the Albula to St. Moritz. Again, in mid-winter I have crossed the Splügen in a blizzard—one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. From St. Moritz to Chiavenna, the key of the Rhaetian Alps, as the Romans named it, was an easy but very delightful sledge-drive. The Hospice I loved best was that on the Bernina. As the snow deepened, often to twelve feet, you moved up a floor. I shall never forget, one especially hard winter, seeing there icicles as burly as giants and as tall. Clear but wrinkled they stood up in the moonlight like awful ghosts of the dead Romans who had trod that pass when the Caesars laid their heavy hands on the Julier, the Septimer, and the Bernina. Then the Via Mala in winter was full of romance. There I heard, or fancied that I heard, the phantom drum of the French soldier who, when Macdonald passed the Splügen, was swept away by an avalanche. It dropped him and his platoon on a kind of snow island which formed for a little time in the dreadful gorge. They could no more be helped than the castaway in Cowper's poem. But for all that the drummer beat the advance upon his

drum and cheered on the legions of the Republic marching to stand by the armies of the First Consul in Italy.

People do no journeys now by sledge. The railway is quicker, though certainly it is not half so pleasant. To be wrapped in thick furs, to have the sun warming one's cheeks and yet know that you are moving in some forty degrees of frost is a kind of Paradise. A few people go sledge-rides for pleasure, but as a rule now the skating-rink or the ski-ing fields or the dance floor seem to offer superior attractions. But perhaps, after all, the younger generation is right, for, though a good snow track on the post road, a good horse, and a sledge with long runners give the poetry of motion, I admit that the skier can get, not only to the highest heavens in the Alps, but can attain to the most fascinating form of motion next to galloping on the back of a thoroughbred. Indeed, though no skier, I am not sure that the skier cannot justly claim to hold the key of the door which opens to the greatest of all athletic pleasures.

Long may the lure of the Alps hold us and our race! A visit to the Alps still remains the best possible of holidays. No man or woman is really at his or her best till he has got above the six thousand feet level. That is happiness. To add another four thousand feet is to many of us to attain to a taste of Elysium while still in the body natural.

Ah, happy, happy pair! You are taking the golden road to the snows. The sparkling crystals are your lodestars. The still, clear air you breathe is your benison and your glory. Of all the *amours de voyage* those of the Swiss highlands in winter are the best.

## BYRON AS A LOVE POET

27th December 1923.—Byron fancied himself as a love poet, and was so confident and vehement in this assertion that he managed to convert most of his contemporaries, *i.e.* the readers of the English and American worlds, and of the Continent, to thinking that he was what he claimed to be. Yet, in reality, though no doubt the poet of conventional passion or even of sexual desire, he did not understand the hearts of either men or women. He was full of go and vigour, and of poignant, though rough, melody; but love in the true sense rests on reflection, and, as Goethe said with his unerring diagnosis in literature and the human emotions, ‘When Byron reflects, he is a child.’ It is part of the paradox of Byron’s genius and of the attitude of the world towards him, that the best love poem that he ever wrote, the one that has most depth of feeling and a touch of something which is almost like reflection, is almost unknown. The poem I mean is the ‘Opening Lines to *Lara*.’ These were cancelled by Byron, and remained unknown till about twenty-five years ago, when they were published in a monthly periodical, *Murray’s Magazine*. Then, owing to some controversy as to who owned the copyright, they were not included in the Complete Poetical Works of Byron—that admirable edition which includes so many valuable fragments of the poet, for Byron was one of those poets who are often at their very best in fragments. It takes art, knowledge, patience, and unselfishness to finish a poem or a picture. When the poem was published in *Murray’s* I remember quoting it in *The Spectator* without any protest, and I hope I may take that as a sign that I can quote it here, without

indiscretion and without violating anybody's legal rights :

OPENING LINES WRITTEN TO SERVE AS AN  
INTRODUCTION TO *LARA*.

WHEN she is gone, the loved, the best, the one  
Whose smile hath gladdened though perchance undone ;  
Whose name, too dearly cherished to impart,  
Dies on the lip, but trembles in the heart ;  
Whose sudden mention can almost convulse  
And lighten through the ungovernable pulse,  
Till the heart leaps so keenly to the word  
We fear that throb can hardly beat unheard,  
Then sinks at once beneath that sickly chill  
That follows when we find her absent still ;  
When such is gone, too far again to bless,  
Oh God, how slowly comes Forgetfulness !  
Let none complain how faithless and how brief  
The brain's remembrance or the bosom's grief ;  
Or, ere they thus forbid us to forget,  
Let Mercy strip the memory of regret.  
Yet, selfish still, we would not be forgot ;  
What lip dare say, ' My Love, remember not ? '  
Oh, best and dearest, thou whose thrilling name  
My heart adores too deeply to proclaim !  
My memory, almost ceasing to repine,  
Would mount to Hope if once secure of thine.  
Meantime the tale I weave must mournful be,  
As absence to the heart that lives on thee.

The lines, as one sees, have every kind of objection from the point of view of diction, phrase, and even grammar. And yet how full they are of the *Vitamines* of Poetry ! What could be more moving than the line :

' And lighten through the ungovernable pulse ' ?

## JEREMY TAYLOR

28th December 1923.—I have been reading Mr. Martin Armstrong's selections from the works of Jeremy Taylor and find them quite delightful. As a rule I may be described as a foe to selections, though somehow or other I have always been a great reader of them. One is apt to be suspicious of the selector and to think that he has left out the things one would have liked most, and that he is thinking of his own predilections rather than of yours, though how, poor man, he is to guess what yours are it is hard to say ! However, Mr. Armstrong is a very comprehensive and intelligent selector, and furthermore Jeremy Taylor is so terribly diffuse a writer that the ordinary man cannot possibly find time to dig out the gems for himself. Jeremy Taylor was in reality an orator, and a very good one ; but he suffered from the orator's chief vice, profusion of words. Even in the dedications of his books he could not abandon the oratorical manner, though a dedication should in truth be much more like an inscription than a speech. But Jeremy Taylor was no friend of the lapidary style. He liked the lava torrent of eloquence too much. Take the example of the dedication of *The Liberty of Prophecy* to Lord Hatton of Kirby. It is magnificent, but it is an address on ' the presentation of, etc., ' not a dedication :

' MY LORD, IN THIS GREAT STORM WHICH HATH dasht the Vessell of the Church all in pieces, I have been cast upon the Coast of *Wales*, and in a little Boat thought to have enjoyed that rest and quietnesse which in *England*, in a greater, I could not hope for. Here I cast Anchor. And here again I was exposed to the mercy of the Sea and the gentlenesse of an

Element that could neither distinguish things nor persons. And, but that He who stilleth the raging of the Sea, and the noise of His Waves, and the madness of His people, had provided a Plank for me, I had been lost to all the opportunities of content or study. But I know not whether I have been more preserved by the courtesies of my friends or the gentleness and mercies of a noble Enemy.'

But, though I think the passage far too eloquent for a dedication, it is, of course, a magnificent piece of prose. One has not read three lines before one feels that a true master of words is at work. Here is the necromancer who is not afraid, like so many of us, of the verbal devils which he raises by his incantations. His words never mutiny or go to the left when he gives them 'Right incline!' They 'jump' to his behests sea-fashion and carry out all their orders 'lively' and well.

It must not be supposed that Jeremy Taylor is always diffuse, or, to be more correct, diffuse all the time. Like all great orators, he was also a great phrase maker. Take, for instance, the following: '*Religion is worth as much to-day as it was yesterday.*' Poignant and worthy of Sir Thomas Browne is the following: '*A man talks of religion but as of a dream.*' Neither Fleet Street nor all the editorial offices in New York could better, as a 'caption,' the perfect simplicity of '*It was well observed by the Persian Ambassador.*' That last is the prelude of a delightful story of how the young gallants of the Persian army before a battle railed at their gods, 'saying that there were no such things, and that all things came by chance and industry, nothing by the providence of the supreme power.' But when next day they had been handsomely trounced by their enemies, they were all for prayer and fasting! Jeremy Taylor, when rubbing

in the obvious moral, shows a charming example of the intimacies of his style. For instance, in speaking of the broken sinner, he says how he changes his impudence into 'the blushings of a chidden girl.' Yet one more admirable headline out of many may be taken, though it is perhaps a little too long to call a caption: '*We do not live in an age in which there is so much need to bid men be wary, as to take care they be innocent.*'

## HORACE AS A POET

30th December 1923.—Nothing enrages me more than to hear Horace spoken of as if he were a poet of the first rank. He is nothing of the kind. Horace is, *par excellence*, the poet of the unpoetical. His own phrase a little altered may be applied to him. He speaks of performing the functions of a whetstone. He performs to a nicety the functions of a touchstone. It is by his opinion of Horace that you quickest find out whether a man has or has not got the true sense of poetry. If he is enthusiastic over Horace and tells you, 'That's the kind of poetry I like—the perfect expression of a clear-cut thought,' you know that your interlocutor has not the very slightest notion of what poetry really is.

Poetry is, above all things, the outcome of passion. But of passion Horace knew nothing, though of the sex instinct he knew, no doubt, a good deal. Poetry is simple; that is, it is unmixed. It makes a direct frontal attack on the emotions. Horace could make an excellent prose report on the feelings; but the emotional appeal, which Virgil used with such tremendous force, was utterly beyond him. The tragedy of the 'air-reaching arm' was not for the laureate-in-waiting to Augustus. Poetry, again, acts on the

intellect through the senses, and so is at once hypnotic and mystic. Horace could not rise above the *curiosa felicitas*—an enchanting trick, but one which in fact belongs just as much to the prose writer as to the poet. This lack of the supreme sensuous appeal is especially apparent in Horace's use of metre. In one sense he is marvellously successful as a metrist; but you can always see the machinery at work. The sound wins your ear, but there is none of that indefinable magic, that divine lilt, which makes the heart interrupt its rhythmic duty. The prosodiocal elegancies of the *Odes* are often amazingly clever, but they are not the Orphic harmonics that move trees and mountains. Horace is liked as men like Tokay or Château Yquem. For Catullus and Virgil is reserved that adoration which knows no doubts, no fears, no disillusion.

Do I really mean to say that Horace is not a poet? Did not half the statesmen of the eighteenth century carry little Aldine editions of the *Odes* in their pockets? Was not the power to quote Horace a passport which would carry a man from Warsaw to Palermo? Exactly! I say with a full sense of this dread responsibility that Horace was no poet. In my own family there is a tale of an Indian Civil Servant of great mental attainments, but with no sense of poetry, who throughout his career in the Wellesleyan epoch was never without a pocket Horace and a pocket Hafiz. His childlike faith in Horace makes it certain that he had no notion whatever of the true afflatus.

A proof that Horace is essentially unpoetical is to be found in the fact that he is untranslatable, except in such pieces of pure persiflage as the *Persicos Odi*. You can transfer into another language some deep emotion, some cry of the heart, some tear for mortal things. A piece of verbal felicity is another matter. It will not stand transplanting. Look at the innumer-



able attempts to translate Horace's *Epistles*, which unquestionably contain delightful examples of literary artifice. Though many great poets have tried, none has succeeded in giving us the spirit of the *Epistles*. Yet both Dr. Johnson and Dryden achieved the Juvenal 'touch' in their translations. Pope's imitations of the *Epistles* are good only because they travel so far from the original as to cease to be in touch with the poet supposed to be imitated. During fifty years I have never failed to look at translations and imitations of Horace; but, strange as it may seem, I can think of only one which has enough life in it to be remembered. And this exception is only concerned with four lines. The opening lines of Byron's *Hints from Horace*, 'being an allusion or partial imitation in English verse of the *Ars Poetica*,' are, no doubt, excellent, and though I have not read them for thirty years, I believe I can still quote them correctly :

'Who would not laugh if Lawrence, hired to grace  
His costly canvas with a flattered face,  
Belied his art, till Nature with a blush  
Saw "Kits" grow Centaurs underneath his brush?'

That is alive; but I defy any one to get anything memorable from the rest of the poem. After all, even here the thought is not very deep, nor is the language in which the obvious is conveyed very felicitous. Frankly, Byron's *Hints from Horace* are quite unreadable, though, curiously enough, Byron actually died in the belief that this futile imitation of a not very memorable original was his most successful work.

I have, greatly daring, expressed my *exact* feeling about Horace; but in doing so I have not forgotten Halifax's wise dictum, quoted elsewhere: 'A man

that should call everything by its right name would hardly pass the streets without being knocked down as a common enemy.' However, I must risk it, though it would perhaps be wise to avoid intellectual society till this book is forgotten. Throwing stones at or into a river is a much-loved occupation for all boys of all ages and sexes.

### A SWISS SCORE

*3rd January 1924.*—Here is a story which shows that the Swiss are by no means so slow-witted as is often assumed. A French soldier reproached one of the Papal Swiss guards for being a mercenary: 'Vous ne battez que pour de l'argent, tandis que nous ne nous battons que pour de l'honneur.' 'Bien,' replied the Swiss, 'tout le monde se bat pour ce qui lui manque.'

### DISRAELI AS AN APHORIST

*6th January 1924.*—Of Disraeli's maxims, political and social, I never tire. Here are some examples:

'In his organization there was a deficiency. He was a man without affections, though it would be harsh to say he had no heart, for he was susceptible of great emotions, but not for individuals.'

Is it possible for a man to be capable of abstract who is not capable of individual emotion? I should say that it was quite possible for a Jew. All through Jewish literature it is difficult to discern between racial and individual feeling. This curious personality is the keynote of Disraeli's aphorisms and 'pregnant sayings.' The philosophy to be obtained from the maxims as a whole is cheerful, though realistic; the advice given is sound when the writer is concerned with serious matters, and cynical when he is dealing

with social success. 'Existence is a pleasure—and the greatest'; but 'there is always something to worry you. It comes as regularly as sunrise.' You may 'rest assured you must go through every trial that is peculiar to men of your organization.' It is taken for granted that every man is ambitious. 'Every one loves power, even if they do not know what to do with it.' Not many men, of course, become famous. 'Very few people reach posterity. Posterity is a most limited assembly.' A modicum of success, however, depends, I am given to understand, very largely upon a man's self, though, 'as a general rule, nobody has money who ought to have it.'

Here are some items of counsel. 'Next to knowing when to seize an opportunity the most important thing in life is to know when to forego an advantage.' This is excellent advice, though even in argument not easy to take. The next is more cynical. 'Always have distinguished friends. Never have fools for friends, they are of no use.' Any social success, however unimportant, is enjoyable. 'To be king of your company is a poor ambition—yet homage is homage, and smoke is smoke—whether it comes out of the chimney of a palace or of a workhouse.' 'To govern men,' I read, 'you must either excel them in their accomplishments or despise them.' Even with one or both of these qualifications it seems, however, that a certain amount of sympathy must be experienced or feigned. 'To rule men we must be men; to prove that we are strong we must be weak; to prove that we are giants we must be dwarfs; even as the Eastern genie was hid in the charmed bottle, our wisdom must be concealed under folly, and our constancy under caprice.' A great deal, he asserts, is to be learned from women. 'Talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is

the way to gain fluency, because you need not care what you say, and had better not be sensible.' This maxim as it stands is not wholly flattering to women, and does not convey Disraeli's attitude towards their sex quite accurately. He dwells continually upon the brains of his female characters, whether he intends to charm or to repel the reader. His most perfect heroines owe as much to their wits as to their beauty. On the other hand, the lady who had 'guanoed her mind with French novels' was, he admits, amusing company; and he never allows the brains of his heroines to be overshadowed by their prejudices. The description of the Duchess of Bellamont, who lived among the Puritan aristocracy, and 'shrank with a haughty terror from the fashionable world,' is a case in point. 'She was a woman of fixed opinions and firm, compact prejudices. Brought up in an austere circle where on all matters irrevocable judgment had been passed, which enjoyed the advantages of knowing exactly what was true in dogma, what was just in conduct, and what correct in manner, she had early acquired the convenient habit of decision, while her studious mind employed its considerable energies in mastering every writer who favoured those opinions which she had previously determined were the right ones.'

The definition of religion which finds a place among these maxims is incontrovertible, a perfect example of one of those specious statements of fact which are not expressions of the truth. 'Religion is civilization, the highest; it is a reclamation of man from savageness by the Almighty.' I am reminded of Disraeli's definition of the Church, to which the same criticism applies. 'The Church is a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles which, although local in

their birth, are of divine origin and of universal application.' Disraeli's greatest admirers could hardly call him a religious man. Yet religion had a strange attraction for him. He writes of the devout emotions of his heroes and heroines with at least as much zest as he writes of their wealth and luxury. To his mind, all good things came from Judea, and all that was Jewish was good.

Turning from religion to law, I get some really fine sayings full of sagacity. 'The divine right of kings may have been a plea for feeble tyrants, but the divine right of government is the keystone of human progress, and without it government sinks into police, and a nation is degraded into a mob.' While I am thinking of 'divine right,' an exquisite piece of Royal flattery hidden under the guise of Monarchic philosophy is well worth quoting. 'The first great duty of a monarch is to know how to bow skilfully. Nothing is more difficult . . . a royal bow may often quell a rebellion, and sometimes crush a conspiracy.' Two more maxims I cannot forbear to quote, the one for its curious sidelight on political history, the other for its obvious Parliamentary wisdom. 'I have observed in our history that it is the characteristic of this country that it always retraces its steps. I believe the prosperity of England may be attributed to this cause, not that it has committed less blunders than other countries, but that the people are a people more sensible of their errors.' Here is the second: 'No government can be long secure without a formidable opposition. It reduces their supporters to the tractable number which can be managed by the joint influence of fruition and of hope. It offers vengeance to the discontented, and distinction to the ambitious; and employs the energies of aspiring spirits, who other-

wise may prove traitors in a division, or assassins in a debate.'

Those who regret the lost ideals of Victorian days would do well to read the sixth chapter of the fifth book of *Coningsby*, wherein Disraeli summarizes his view of smart society in the 'forties. 'Lucretia had passed her life in a refined but somewhat dissolute society, not, indeed, that a word that could call forth a maiden blush, conduct that could pain the purest feelings, could be heard or witnessed in those polished and luxurious circles. The most exquisite taste pervaded their atmosphere, and the uninitiated who found themselves in those perfumed circles and those golden saloons might believe from all that passed before them that their inhabitants were as pure, as orderly, and as irreproachable as their furniture. But among the habitual dwellers in these delicate halls there was a tacit understanding, a prevalent doctrine that required no formal exposition, no proofs, no illustration, no comment, and no gloss, and which was rather a traditional conviction than an imparted dogma, that the esoteric public were the victims of very vulgar prejudices which these enlightened personages wished neither to disturb nor to adopt.'

There was never drawn a better picture of that last stage in which pollution makes the water not turbid but bright and clear, not disgusting but tasteless and odourless.

#### POPE'S LADY SUFFOLK

7th January 1924.—Lady Suffolk, Pope's friend and the *alleged* mistress of George II., seems to have been the perfect woman of the world. Perhaps the best picture of her character is to be found in the wonderful Dialogue between Lady Suffolk and Queen Caroline

given in the *Report of the Historical Commission* preserved at Blickling, Norfolk, and published some twenty years ago. The essence of the conversation, which is as follows, strongly supports 'the belief of her friends, to which Horace Walpole refers while he dissents from it, that Lady Suffolk's connection with the King was confined to pure friendship.' Lady Suffolk tells Queen Caroline that, considering the open proofs she has received from the King of his disfavour, she feels she has no course open to her but to retire from Court. The Queen expresses great surprise. 'Child, you dream!' she exclaims. 'How has he shown his displeasure? Did I receive you as if you were under mine?' 'No, Madam,' she replies, 'if your Majesty had treated me in the same manner the King did, I could never again have appear'd in your presence.' Caroline continues her efforts towards conciliation. Lady Suffolk, she is sure, has taken undue umbrage. 'You are very warm,' she remonstrates, 'but, believe me, I am your friend, your best friend. You don't know a Court.' Lady Suffolk, however, will not be appeased. 'I fear, Madam, if I have not acquir'd knowledge in twenty years I never shall now,' she says. 'I beg it may be permitted me,' she goes on, 'to speak of the King as of a man only who was my friend. He has been dearer to me than my own brother, so, Madam, as a friend I feel resentment at being ill-treated and sorrow to have lost his friendship.' The Queen still maintains that the whole thing is a matter of passing irritation. 'Lady Suffolk, I daresay if you will have a little patience the King will treat you as he does the other lady's, and I suppose that would satisfy you.' 'No, Madam,' is the succinct reply, which does not, however, appear to anger Caroline in the least. Once more she begs her to remain in the Royal household, promising to influence

the King to forgo his mysterious displeasure. 'I never will be forgiven an offence I have not committed,' cries Lady Suffolk. 'After five and twenty years to be ill-treated without knowing my crime and then to stay upon the foot of Lady Albemarle !' The Queen tries to reason with her upon another score. 'Upon my word, Lady S., you don't consider what the world will say. For God's sake, consider your character. You leave me because the King will not be more particular to you than to others.' Lady Suffolk's answer is worthy of the woman who was not 'awed by rumour.' 'Madam, as to my character, the world must have settled that long ago, whether just or unjust.' A more dignified rôle than Lady Suffolk played throughout this interview it would be hard to imagine, and it certainly leaves upon the reader an impression of honesty in every sense of the word. As to the immediate cause of her disfavour with the King, historians differ. Probably it may have been nothing else than her increasing deafness. The King wanted some one who could amuse him, sympathize with him, give him ideas, of which he had not too many, and serve him as a funnel whereby he could receive the thoughts of better heads. Lady Suffolk was interested alike in the affairs of State and the petty gossip of the Court, just as she was friendly alike with politicians, men of letters, and women of fashion. Her deafness, which for years had not been serious enough to interfere much with her conversation, became latterly an inevitable drawback. She had cultivated a friendship—supposing it to have been nothing more than a friendship—with a selfish, hard-hearted, worldly man because he was a King, and she deserved to suffer ; but she suffered with dignity and self-command. She was, no doubt, a woman to whom the opinion of the world was



supremely indifferent, and the atmosphere of a Court supremely delightful. There are many men and a few women who care only for their own good opinion—it is on this supposition alone that we can excuse her toleration of Swift's hints.

In view of so spirited a courtier and so undisturbable a woman, can we wonder that when Lord Peterborough, the last of the old Romantics and the first of the new, when he was dying, gave her a noble testimonial? He had been reading a book on Julian the Apostate. He learnt there 'how a soldier, a philosopher, and a friend of Lady Suffolk ought to die.' The key to her conduct may perhaps be found in the letter she wrote to Mr. Berkeley, to whom, after Lord Suffolk's death, she was in middle age happily married. 'There was no company at the tea-table on Tuesday but what most people hate to keep, but for whom I have so particular a respect and regard, that upon her approbation for every action of my life, my ease and happiness has and must always depend.'

What Lady Suffolk and the Queen say of *The Court* as an entity is curiously supported by the comment of that Humanist born out of his due time, Master Walter Map. Here is his attempt to define, or at any rate describe, the Court :

“ ‘ I am in time, and I speak of time,’ said Augustine, and straightway added, “ I know not what time is.” With like wonderment can I say that I am in the court, and speak of the court, and know not—God alone knoweth—what the court is. This I know withal that the court is not time ; it partaketh, indeed, of time's temper, a thing of flux and change, of a place, and yet of subtle shifts, never persisting in the same subsistence. At my withdrawal from it, I know it through and through ; on my return to it, I find little or nothing that I have left there ; having become a

stranger I view it as a thing altogether strange. The court is the same, but the members are changed. If I shall describe the court as Porphyrius defineth "genus," perchance I shall not lie in saying that it is a multitude which standeth in some relation or other to one chief principle. Certainly we are an unnumbered multitude, striving to please only one man, and to-day we are one multitude, to-morrow we shall be another. The court indeed is not changed, it is always the same.'

This cannot be bettered, though it was written about 1160 or so—a period which in our arrogant ignorance we are inclined to regard as purely barbarous! The longer I live, and the more I read, the less I take on trust or hearsay, the more inclined I am to hold that in anything approaching similarity of circumstance men and women act to a sealed pattern. As Stevenson said in a pet, 'Man is a kind of nauseous ape.'

### DIARIES

*10th January 1924.*—Wesley's Diary is one of the longest in the world. It is often dull, but there are also often very brilliant and moving entries. Here is a splendid passage of invective, worthy of the scholar and the divine, in which Wesley summed up his detestation of Machiavelli :

'In my passage home, having procured a celebrated book, the works of Nicholas Machiavel, I set myself carefully to read and consider it. I began with a prejudice in his favour, having been informed he had often been misunderstood, and greatly misrepresented. I weighed the sentiments that were less common; transcribed the passages wherein they were contained; compared one passage with another, and endeavoured to form a cool, impartial judgment. And my cool

judgment is, that if all the other doctrines of devils which have been committed to writing since letters were in the world were collected together in one volume, it would fall short of this : and that should a prince form himself by this book, so calmly recommending hypocrisy, treachery, lying, robbery, oppression, adultery, whoredom, and murder of all kinds, Domitian or Nero would be an angel of light compared to that man.' (26th January 1737.)

The date is noteworthy. There were very few people in that bleak epoch, between the eclipse of Pope and the rise of Johnson, who could have written this noble passage. Dean Beeching, in his *Pages from a Private Diary*, said of Wesley's Diary :

' Every page of the journal testifies to the scholar no less than the gentleman. He quotes obscure Greek epigrams ; he reads to his Savannah flock exhortations of St. Ephrem Syrus.'

While touching on Diaries I feel, however, that I must pay my meed of homage to those of Queen Victoria. Could anything be more perfect than the following :

' 1837.—Lord Melbourne rode near me the whole time. The more I see of him and the more I know of him, the more I like and appreciate his fine and honest character. I have seen a great deal of him every day these last five weeks, and I have always found him in good humour, kind, good and most agreeable : I have seen him in my Closet for Political affairs, I have ridden out with him (every day), I have sat near him constantly at and after dinner, and talked about all sorts of things, and have always found him a kind and most excellent and very agreeable man. I am very fond of him.

' 1838.—I asked Lord Melbourne how he liked my dress. He said he thought it " very pretty " and that

"it did very well." He is so natural and funny and nice about *toilette*, and has very good taste, I think.

'1839.—Said to Lord M. I was never satisfied with my own reading, and thought I put the wrong emphasis upon words; he said, "No, you read very well; I thought you read it very well this morning"; and I said I often felt so conscious of saying stupid things in conversation and that I thought I was often very childish. "You've no reason to think that," said Lord M.; and that I feared I often asked him tiresome and indiscreet questions and bored him. "Never the least," he replied, "you ought to ask."

'Talked of my being so silent, which I thought wrong and uncivil as I hated it in others. "Silence is a good thing," said Lord M., "if you have nothing to say." I said I hated it in others and that it annoyed me when he was silent. "I'm afraid I am so sometimes," he said: "won't say a word." Yes, I said, that nothing could be got out of him sometimes. "And that you dislike?" he said. Yes, I said, it made me unhappy, which made him laugh.

'Talked to Lord M. of his being tired, and I said he mustn't go to sleep before so many people for that he generally snored! "That proclaims it too much," he said, in which I *quite* agreed.'

## THE ART OF TRANSLATION

17th *January* 1924.—The question of translation has always fascinated me, and especially during the last few years when I have become an industrious reader of the Classics through translation.

The two poles in translation are the paraphrase, and pure construing or verbal substitution, *i.e.* the English word for the foreign word. Which method should be employed is a difficult question, and largely depends upon the reader's taste. The best thing ever said on the problem is to my mind the passage

in Selden's *Table Talk*. Though it is, no doubt, known to most reading people, it is so short that one may as well put it on record here :

‘ There is no book so translated as the Bible. For the purpose, if I translate a French book into English, I turn it into English phrase, not into French-English. *Il fait froid*, I say, it is cold, not it makes cold ; but the Bible is translated into English words rather than into English phrase. The Hebraisms are kept, and the phrase of that language is kept : as, for example (he uncovered her shame), which is well enough, so long as scholars have to do with it ; but when it comes among the common people, lord, what gear do they make of it ! ’

I have no doubt myself that the translation by verbal substitution is the one which gives us much the most local colour and puts us more *en rapport* with the writer. When the Bible was first translated, no doubt it seemed perfectly strange and unintelligible to many readers owing to the Hebraic idioms and methods of literary presentation. The book, however, had so great a spiritual and intellectual impact upon our language, our prose style, and our habits of thought, that it to some extent Hebraicized our style, our phraseology, the shape of our sentences, and the contour of our thoughts. We could not now go back to paraphrase translation without serious injury to our literature. For myself, I would much rather see the Classics treated in the same way than adopt the most elegant paraphrase, unless the paraphraser is a poet like Pope or Dryden, who builds what is really a new poem on the old foundations. In spite of their crudity, I have always felt much nearer Virgil, Horace, and Caesar in Dr. Giles's egregious cribs than in much more smooth, scholarly, and elegant translations where the object is to try

to get an exact reflection of the thought in scholarly English. Take, for example, the following passage from the Sixth Book of the *Æneid* (*Système Giles*):

‘The Cumæan Sibyl sings her dreadful mysteries from her inmost shrine, in such words, enveloping true things in obscure ones, and bellows in the cavern: Apollo shakes those reins over her raving, and directs excitements under her breast. As soon as her fury ceased, and her raging mouth was at rest, the hero Æneas begins: “No form of troubles, O virgin, arises new or unexpected to me; I have anticipated and have gone through all things beforehand with myself in my mind. I pray one thing: the gate of the infernal king is said (to be) here, and the darksome lake (formed) by overflowing Acheron, that it may happen (to me) to go to the sight and the presence of my dear fathers; that thou teach the way and open the sacred doors. I snatched him away on these shoulders through flames and a thousand pursuing weapons, and rescued him from the midst of the enemy. Him having accomplished my path (though) infirm, I bore with me.’

So rises the Virgilian fountain from the turbid reservoir of what Dr. Giles himself calls: ‘Construed, with the text, into English, literally and word for word.’

The passage I have ‘recovered’ from the crib of childhood’s unhappy hours may seem ‘impossible’ to the mind of elegance, but I do not see why it should not be enormously improved by some person with a real knowledge and feeling for the English language. Persons working on these principles might give versions of the Classics which, though they might seem uncouth at first, would after a certain time educate readers into the Latin attitude of mind. In the case of Greek writers, there would be comparatively little difficulty. Greek is a reasonable tongue, and there

is no standing on one's head and painting with one's toes as in the best Latin prose.

In Eastern languages the system of word substitution answers admirably. I remember a translation of the *Bustan* of Sadi, *i.e.* *The Rose Garden*, made in English in Calcutta in the year 1800, which, though odd in places, brings you infinitely nearer to the poet than do the regular Persian scholars. I think it possible, though I admit it does not seem likely, that one would be able to read even Jami if he were treated by substitution. Hafiz, again, is a good field for the substitutor. It is also conceivable that, if Welsh and Gaelic poetry were firmly treated in this way, their attractions might be increased. What an autumnal rose for the later phases of Mr. Lloyd George's career would be a new version of the *Mabinogion*! Could there be a fitter task for the Cincinnatus of Churt and Criccieth? Lord Haldane might follow suit with a new Ossian in *vers libre*—unless Mr. Ian Macpherson should regard that as poaching.

Before I leave the subject of translation I must allow myself one more flower from Selden's wonderful *Hortus Siccus*. It is as follows :

‘ The English Translation of the Bible is the best Translation in the World, and renders the Sense of the Original best, taking in for the English Translation the Bishops' Bible as well as King James's. The Translators in King James's time took an excellent way. That part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue (as the Apocrypha to Andrew Downs) and then they met together, and one read the Translation, the rest holding in their hands some Bible, either of the learned Tongues, or French, Spanish, Italian, etc. If they found any fault, they spoke ; if not, he read on.’

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

18th January 1924.—Matthew Arnold when in London in the 'fifties lived in my Square, *i.e.* Chester Square, and at No. 2. It is just opposite the library in which I write these words, and when he looked out of his window he must have seen mine. He was a wonderful critic of men, races, and nations as well as of poetry. Could anything be better than this diagnosis of the French temperament? It was written in a letter from Provence after he had been seeing Nîmes, Arles, and Avignon :

‘The French build beautifully, a thousand times better than we do—but in all they do, and they are doing a wonderful deal, there is something “coquet” in the grace and beauty which is utterly beneath the Roman dignity—which is quite Gaulish, in the spirit of that very clever people for whom many centuries ago Caesar, who beat them so soundly, had evidently with all his appreciation of their cleverness so deep-rooted a contempt. But they have improved since that time with all the mixture of race they have had, and are certainly now a very wonderful people, though not the least Roman. Their prosperity and improvement is wonderful—the state of cultivation of this south of France, the exquisite order and perfection of its vast olive and vine crops, strike eyes even as ignorant as mine—and the one thing the people desire is to carry on this material improvement without anarchy and at the same time without any restoration of feudalism. You ask me whether they are attached to the present government; they are sincerely grateful to it for having restored order—I saw to-day at Arles on the Roman obelisk an inscription to Louis Napoleon with the simple words, “Il vous a sauvé de l’Anarchie”—which you may depend upon it expresses the sincere feeling of the industrious



classes. But above all, the French peasant (who feeds the army and is the real power of France) sticks to this man and is disposed to maintain him because he is the symbol, after all, of that final breach with the past and with a feudal aristocracy, by means of which the peasant has become a personage and which he is firmly resolved shall never be filled up. In his mind both branches of the Bourbons are connected with the revolutionary system, and that is why they are both antipathic to him. And there is a good deal of truth in the French peasant's view; Louis Napoleon is as little connected with the past as the French peasant—he has the ideas of the modern world in which he was long knocked about in a way in which the members of the old royal races—our Queen or the Emperors of Russia and Austria—cannot have them—in a way in which even the old aristocracies cannot have them. His uncle had them too, and was a man of genius which this man is not—but he went off his centre with success and dashed himself to pieces. But you may depend upon it that it is a *mot* of the first Napoleon's which is now inspiring this second Napoleon—that the sovereign who put himself at the head of the cause of the peoples of Europe would be the master of the future.'

Of course, there is some wrong-headedness, but there is also great insight here. Incidentally, this same letter contains a memorable contrast between Lord Lansdowne, to whom Matthew Arnold had been private secretary, and the great Lord Derby, the Rupert of debate. Lord Derby, according to Matthew Arnold, is 'the true type of the British political nobleman—with eloquence, high feeling and good intentions—but the ideas of a schoolboy.'

This passage about British statesmen suggests another passage in a letter written from London in 1849, which runs as follows :

'More and more I think ill of the great people here :

that is, their two capital faults, stupidity and hardness of heart, become more and more clear to me. Their faults of character seem to me, as I watch the people in the park, to be the grand impairers of English beauty. In the men certainly; for the faces of the handsomest express either a stupid pride, or the stupidity without the pride, and the half-alive look of many pretty faces among the women, so different from the southern languor, points to something very like stupidity. And a proud-looking Englishwoman is the hardest-looking thing I know in the world. So I should not be sorry to get away, but I still accustom myself to feel that we should pity these people rather than be angry with them. I do not think any fruitful revolution can come in my time; and meanwhile, thank God, there are many honest people on earth, and the month of May comes every year. . . . Good-bye; this is rather a sombre letter, but I have not breakfasted and it is 11½, which is perhaps the reason. I have many poetical schemes, but am fermenting too much about poetry in general to do anything satisfactory. My last volume I have got absolutely to dislike.'

Matthew Arnold was often accused of being too much inclined to find virtues in the great classical writers and defects in those of his own country; but this is not a true bill—witness the following passage of profound literary wisdom in regard to his own classical play, *Merope* :

'There is a kind of pity and fear (Kotzebue is a great master of it) which cannot be purified, it is the most agitating and overwhelming, certainly, but, for the sake of a higher result, we must renounce this. Pity and fear of a certain kind—say commiseration and awe, and you will perhaps better feel what I mean—I think *Merope* does excite—as does Greek tragedy in general; I allow, however, that the problem for the poet is, or should be, to unite the highest

degree of agitatingness on the part of his subject-matter, with the highest degree of control and assuagement on the part of his own exhibition of it—Shakespeare, under immense difficulties, goes further in this respect than the Greeks, and so far he is an advance upon them.'

In a passage near this he drops a very curious remark about the conventional ideas entertained as to the treatment of women by the Greeks. 'The influence of women in Greece was immense.'

### THE CHINESE WAR BOOK

18th January, 1924.—I have been reading the Chinese War Book, a work till lately the recognized text-book for Chinese students of Strategy. Yet it was written by Sun Tzu a generation before Aristotle had Alexander the Great as his private pupil !

I remember Lord Morley once quoting to me with sardonic approval an old saying to the effect that three things were of importance in a speech or a book : '*What was said ; How it was said ; and Who said it.*' And he added : 'These three things are always placed in inverted order. The most important thing is, *Who said it ;* the next, *The manner in which it was said.*' *What was said*, i.e. the subject-matter, which the virtuous public is generally inclined to regard as the essential, only came off third best. In the case of Sun Tzu and his *Art of War*, Lord Morley's rule as to relative importance should certainly be applied.

I think I can best explain the kind of man that Sun Tzu was, by calling him the first Staff College professor ever let loose upon a wondering world. He, if any one, was half Don, half Major-General. We do not know a great deal about Sun Tzu's life and work,

except that he was very masterful, very opinionative, in fact a thorough-going, drill-sergeant schoolmaster, and further that the kings and dukes and statesmen whom he influenced seem to have been thoroughly dominated by his powerful will. He practised upon them the first principle of the Art of War, *i.e.* 'making your will prevail over that of the enemy.'

Though we have no very fixed and definite information as to the rise of Sun Tzu to eminence, we have, as so often happens in the East, one or two very striking and detailed stories about this amazing military philosopher. One of these, which shall be given in detail, is, I venture to think, one of the very best military stories in the world, not only for its extraordinary entertainment, but for the admirable way in which it illustrates some of the first principles of military training.

If I were a live American journalist and expert in the contrivance of captions or 'cross-headings,' I should put over this story: "'Form fours" in the Harem.' But before I give the story I want to assure all who may read these pages that this is no invention or fairy tale of mine. Strange as it may seem, it is a literal and serious translation from the works of the earliest biographer and commentator on Sun Tzu and his book. The learned commentator in question is not out to tell a picturesque yarn, but to make one realize the enormous importance which Sun Tzu attached to barrack-square drill as the foundation of military excellence, and how thoroughly he instilled the principles of discipline into the mind of a great king. The king in question, Ho Lu, King of Wu, found it necessary to establish an army. Professor Sun Tzu undertook to organize it. Like the true military professor and bureaucrat he was, Sun Tzu began by preparing an elaborate Memo. which he

handed to the King. Whereupon the King, Ho Lu, said to him : ' I have carefully perused your thirteen chapters. May I submit your theory of managing soldiers to a slight test ? ' Sun Tzu replied : ' You may.' Ho Lu next asked : ' May the test be applied to women ? ' The answer was again in the affirmative, so arrangements were made to bring one hundred and eighty ladies out of the palace.

' Sun Tzu divided them into companies, and placed one of the King's favourite concubines at the head of each. He then bade them all take spears in their hands, and addressed them thus : " I presume you know the difference between front and back, right hand and left hand ? " The girls replied : " Yes." Sun Tzu went on : " When I say ' Eyes front,' you must look straight ahead. When I say ' Left turn,' you must face towards your left hand. When I say ' Right turn,' you must face towards your right hand. When I say ' About turn,' you must face right round towards the back." Again the girls assented. The words of command having been thus explained, he set up the halberds and battle-axes in order to begin the drill. Then, to the sound of drums, he gave the order, " Right turn." But the girls only burst out laughing. Sun Tzu said : " If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame." So he started drilling them again, and this time gave the order " Left turn," whereupon the girls once more burst into fits of laughter. Sun Tzu said : " If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders *are* clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officers." So saying, he ordered the leaders of the two companies to be beheaded. Now the King of Wu was watching the scene from the top of the raised pavilion ; and when he saw that his favourite concubines were about

to be executed, he was greatly alarmed and hurriedly sent down the following message : " We are now quite satisfied as to our general's ability to handle troops. If we are bereft of these two concubines, our meat and drink will lose their savour. It is our wish that they shall not be beheaded." Sun Tzu replied : " Having once received his Majesty's commission to be general of his forces, there are certain commands of his Majesty which, acting in that capacity, I am unable to accept." Accordingly, he had the two leaders beheaded, and straightway installed the pair next in order as leaders in their place. When this had been done, the drum was sounded for the drill once more ; and the girls went through all the evolutions, turning to the right or to the left, marching ahead or wheeling back, kneeling or standing, with perfect accuracy and precision, not venturing to utter a sound. Then Sun Tzu sent a messenger to the King saying : " Your soldiers, sire, are now properly drilled and disciplined, and ready for your Majesty's inspection. They can be put to any use that their sovereign may desire ; bid them go through fire and water, and they will not disobey." But the King replied : " Let our general cease drilling and return to camp. As for us, we have no wish to come down and inspect the troops." Thereupon Sun Tzu said : " The King is only fond of words, and cannot translate them into deeds." After that, Ho Lu saw that Sun Tzu was one who knew how to handle an army and finally appointed him general. In the west, he defeated the Ch'u State, and forced his way into Ying, the capital ; to the north, he put fear into the States of Ch'i and Chin, and spread his fame abroad amongst the feudal princes. And Sun Tzu shared in the might of the King.'

Could that be beaten for grimness, picturesqueness and ironic quaintness, and neatness of narration. It is strikingly characteristic of the Chinese, and of the way in which Oriental autocracy generally is tempered by all kinds of rules and regulations, which

nobody seems to dare to break. The King, having given his commission and trusted this tiger-hearted pedant with a particular piece of business, did not dare to interfere with the course of its despatch, even though the results were personally so painful. Indeed, the position of the poor man reminds one of the widower in the immortal drawing by Charles Keene, which his biographer tells us was refused by *Punch*. At a wife's funeral the undertaker gives certain specific orders. The husband is told that he must go in the same carriage as the deceased's mother. The poor man does not dare to disobey, but as he departs he wails : ' Well, if you insist, I suppose it must be so ; but all I can say is, you have entirely spoiled my day.' Poor Ho Lu's domestic happiness was in a similar way sacrificed on the altar of ' Left turn.'

So much for the personality of Sun Tzu. Nothing could bring him more clearly before us than the mournful story of the poor ladies who thought they were playing at ' Puss in the Corner,' and found they were caught in the iron gin of militarism. At rehearsals of private theatricals or of some big public ceremony I have seen similar ineptitudes attempted by fashionable ladies, and have felt how much the proceedings would have been shortened and improved by a taste of Sun Tzu's methods.

#### CARLYLE AS A HUMORIST

20th January 1924.—I lately came on a series of extracts from Lord Houghton's Commonplace books. He was an unrivalled collector of good things, and he specially appreciated the human side of Carlyle. He clearly realized that the author of *Sartor Resartus* was at heart not a philosopher or a historian, or even a

prophet, but a great humorist—one of the happiest of comic reliefs on the World's stage. Here are some of his sayings recorded by Monckton Milnes :

‘ If Christ were to come to London now, He would not be crucified. Oh no ! He would be lionised, asked out to dinner to hear the strange things He had got to say, and the bettermost people would wonder that a man who could be so sensible on some points should be so foolish on others, would wish He were a little more practical, and so on.’

‘ Conversation with Ranke is like talking to a rookery.’

‘ Cameron showing us an idealised portrait of Schiller, Carlyle merely said, “ He was a man with long red hair, aquiline nose, hollow cheeks, and covered with snuff.” ’

‘ Charles Knight makes of himself a terrible ladle of twaddle to mankind.’

‘ I know no guilt like that of incontinent speech. How long Christ was silent before He spoke ! and how little He then said ! ’

‘ If Beelzebub were to appear in England, he would receive a letter from the Secretary of the Manchester Athenæum, as Eugène Sue did, requesting the honour of his interesting company, and venturing to hope for an address.’

‘ Keats is a miserable creature, hungering after sweets which he can't get ; going about saying, “ I am so hungry ; I should so like something pleasant.” ’

‘ Shelley is always mistaking spasmodic violence for strength. I know no more “ urned ” books than his. It is like the writing of a ghost, uttering infinite wails into the night, unable to help itself or any one else.’

‘ Never write what you can say, and never say what you can write.’

‘ Cobden is an inspired bagman, who believes in a calico millennium. He is always praising America to me. I said to him, “ What have the Americans done



but beget, with unexampled rapidity, twenty millions of the greatest bores on the face of the earth ? ” ’

‘ Poor Guizot ! There he sat in his garret, full of high thought and fine theories, and visited sometimes by divine lights, and then comes the devil and tempts him with Secretaryships of State and Presidency of the Council, and such like, and leads him on and on into lies, and filth, and darkness, and then all at once lets him go, and down he falls into infinite night. I quite approve of Carnot not wanting education for Parliamentary men. He will thus get fewer of the inane, conceited, sniggering apes of the Dead Sea we have in ours.’

‘ I cannot stand Disraeli trying to force his Jewish jackass cries on the world.’

Lord Houghton’s Commonplace books contain a great deal more than conversations. Sometimes they are a diary of current events. The following, for example, are rough memoranda written down at the time of Louis Philippe’s deposition. They afford some excellent stories :

‘ The Queen of the French praying so much in her flight that Louis Philippe said he was obliged to be crying out, “ Mrs. Smith, *on ne prie pas tant en voyage* ” ,’

‘ Louis Philippe saying, “ A National Guard is like a tree in a flower-pot ; it looks very pretty till it grows, and then it breaks the pot—that is, the country—to pieces.” ’

‘ Louis Philippe on Ireland, “ *C’est une maladie incurable, mais jamais mortelle.* ” ’

‘ The only nervousness Lamartine showed in the affair was when, after seventy-two hours of struggle without sleep, he threw himself on his bed, and asked his wife to watch by him for two hours, as he then could sleep calmly ; which he did, and rose quite fresh again.’

‘ I to Prince Charles, “ *Vous autres Français vivez*

*par instinct.*” “*Comme les chiens qui quelquefois s'enragent.*”

‘Louis Philippe to me at Clermont, May 27th, “I have nothing now to look to but the long run.”’

“I cannot cure myself of punctuality.”

“I suppose the creatures we see in the solar microscope tear one another to pieces for difference of opinion.”

Here are some ‘Mots’ of Sydney Smith :

‘Discussion whether Macaulay was better to hear or read. Rogers says the former, because you need not listen. S. S. : “Oh, I’m for the latter, because you can’t dogs-ear and interline him and put him on the shelf when he’s talking.”’

‘On a lady sitting between two Bishops—“Her name is Susanna, I assume?”’

‘Some one of somebody : “He will let nobody talk but himself.” Sydney Smith : “Why, who would if he could help it?”’

Lord Houghton could be more than a recorder of other men’s wit. Here’s an excellent comment :

‘Sydney Smith always exercises his jokes in society before he runs them upon paper.’

‘Sydney Smith offering to call somewhere. “We shall be on our knees to you, if you come.” “I’m glad to hear it. I like to see you in that attitude, as it brings me in several hundreds a year.”’

‘A Bishop should marry a comely woman of a certain age, not such a shamefully pretty girl as the Bishop of Hereford (Musgrave) has done, who looks himself like the waggoner that drives the heavy waggon from Hereford to London.’

‘The integumental charity that covers so many sins.’

‘Having some articles charged at the Custom House, asking under what head : “Unmentioned articles.” “I suppose you would, then, tax the Thirty-Nine.”’

‘In the country I always fear that creation will expire before tea-time.’

‘ At Combe Flory I am always in the condition of saying with Scripture, “ Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass.” ’

‘ No railroad will be safe till they have made a Bishop *in partibus*. ’

‘ Asked to dinner at the Duchess’s when engaged to Whitbread, writing, “ Dear Duchess, sorry I can’t ; engaged to the fermentarian.” Misdirecting the letter to W., who was furious. ’

‘ Calling the railroad whistle “ the attorney,” as being suggestive of the shriek of a spirit in torment. “ You have no right to assume that any other class of men is damned.” ’

‘ In a wet summer, using the anti-liquid prayer, Allen put up a barometer in the Vestry, and remained there during the rest of the service to watch the effects, but, I am sorry to say, did not find them very satisfactory. ’

‘ Lady Davy is blue to her very bones. ’

## JEREMY TAYLOR AND WIDOWS

20th January 1924.—I wrote the other day about Jeremy Taylor. I have been given good cause to return to him by a story which I have just read in a book on Chinese Porcelain. It is one of the best stories in the world :

‘ A Chinese philosopher was passing through a burial-ground when he saw a young and prepossessing lady, dressed in white (the Chinese mourning colour), sitting beside a newly-made grave which she was fanning vigorously with a fan. He went up to her and said, “ Madam, you interest me very much ; will you tell me why you are fanning the grave ? ” The lady scowled at him and made no reply, whereupon he repeated his question, saying, “ I ask out of no idle curiosity, for I am a philosopher and student

of human nature, and your action interests me immensely." The lady again scowled at him and said nothing; so he walked on. As he was passing a bamboo grove hard by, a Chinese servant came out of it and plucked him by the sleeve, saying, "I saw you speaking to my mistress just now and I feel sure you were asking her why she was fanning that newly-made grave. The reason is this: my mistress and my master, who died a fortnight ago, were passionately devoted to each other. When my master was on his deathbed, my mistress wept and said, 'If you die, I swear I will go into a nunnery.' My master replied, 'Swear not that.' My mistress then said, 'Well, if I do not go into a nunnery, I swear I will never marry again.' My master replied, 'Swear not that, but if you must swear, swear that you will not marry again until the sods on my grave are dry.' "

The reason why it reminds me of Jeremy Taylor will be obvious to all students of the most literary of Divines. Jeremy Taylor translated, and I had almost said gloated over, the story of the Ephesian widow in Petronius. He seems, indeed, to have had a constant desire, like Mr. Weller, senior, to talk about widows. He is never happier than in a widow story. For example, he tells with great gusto and charm the story of Leporina, who resolved to carry out a mutual suicide with her husband. This is what happened. 'It was agreed, and she temper'd the poyson and drank the face of the unwholesome goblet, but the weighty poyson sunk to the bottome, and the easie man drank it all off and died, and the woman carried him forth to funerall, and after a little illnesse which she soon recovered, she enter'd upon the inheritance and a second marriage.' But, of course, the great widow passage is the description of the Ephesian widow of Petronius transferred by Taylor to his *Holy Dying* with the utmost felicity of thought and lan-

guage. It is very well known, but it is so exquisite that I cannot forbear to quote it :

‘ THE EPHESIAN WOMAN THAT THE SOULDIER told of in *Petronius* was the talk of all the town, and the rarest example of a dear affection to her husband ; she descended with the corps into the vault, and there being attended by her maiden resolved to weep to death, or die with famine, or a distempered sorrow ; from which resolution nor his, nor her friends, nor the reverence of the principal Citizens, who used the intreaties of their charity and their power, could perswade her. But a souldier that watched seven dead bodies hanging upon trees just over against this monument, crept in and a while stared upon the silent and comely disorder of the sorrow ; and having let the wonder a while breath out at each other eyes, at last he fetched his supper and a bottle of wine with purpose to eat and drinke, and still to feed himself with that sad prettinesse. His pity and first draught of wine made him bold and curious to try if the maid would drink, who having many hours since felt her resolution faint as her wearied body, took his kindness, and the light returned into her eyes and danced like boyes in a festival : and fearing lest the pertinaciousness of her Mistresse sorrows should cause her evil to revert, or her shame to approach, assayed whether she would endure to hear an argument to perswade her to drink and live. The violent passion had layd all her spirits in wildnesse and dissolution, and the maid found them willing to be gathered into order at the arrest of any new object, being weary of the first, of which like leaches they had sucked their fill, till they fell down and burst. The weeping woman took her cordial and was not angry with her maid, and heard the Souldier talk, and he was so pleased with the change, that he who first lov’d the silence of the sorrow was more in love with the musick of her returning voice, especially which he himself had strung and put in tune : and the man began to talk amorously, and the

woman's weak head and heart was soon possessed with a little wine and grew gay, and talked, and fell in love, and that very night in the morning of her passion, in the grave of her husband, in the pangs of mourning, and in her funeral garments, married her new and stranger guest. For so the wild Forragers of *Lybia* being spent with heat and dissolved by the too fond kisses of the Sun, do melt with their common fires, and die with faintness, and descend with motions slow and unable to the little brooks that descend from heaven in the wilderness; and when they drink they return into the vigor of a new life, and contract strange marriages; and the Lioness is courted by a Panther, and she listens to his love, and conceives a monster that all men call unnatural, and the daughter of an equivocal passion and of a sudden refreshment: and so also was it in the Cave at *Ephesus*: for by this time the souldier began to think it was fit he should return to his watch, and observe the dead bodies he had in charge; but when he ascended from his mourning bridall chamber, he found that one of the bodies was stoln by the friends of the dead, and that he was fallen into an evil condition because by the laws of *Ephesus* his body was to be fixed in the place of it. The poor man returns to his woman, cries out bitterly, and in her presence resolves to die to prevent his death, and *in secret to prevent his shame*: but now the woman's love was raging like her former sadness, and grew witty, and she comforted her souldier, and perswaded him to live, lest by losing him who had brought her from death and a more grievous sorrow, she should return to her old solemnities of dying, and lose her honour for a dream, or the reputation of her constancy without the change and satisfaction of an enjoyed love. The man would fain have lived if it had been possible, and she found out this way for him, that he should take the body of her first husband, whose funerall she had so strangely mourned, and put it upon the gallows in the place of the stoln thief.'

What a piece of writing ! There is so much of the sympathy of comprehension and so little cynicism that I may without offence call it a story of innocence. How delightful is the picture of the soldier feeding himself with that 'sad prettiness' and of how the maid's eyes 'danced like boyes in a festival.' Pleasant, too, and without offence in its context is the phrase 'she comforted her souldier.'

### STORY-TELLING. THE HERODOTUS WAY

21st *January* 1924.—I wonder whether the art of concise and yet moving narration, and so of anecdote, can be taught. If it can, and if it is not a question of being born, not made, then undoubtedly one of the best possible models would be Herodotus. He is admittedly the best story-teller in the world. Yet, at the same time, he is never long-winded and never prosy. There is charm, no doubt, in the long-drawn legends with which the Celtic and also the Scandinavian races liked to bemuse themselves, but Herodotus has no use for this sort of thing. He has 'the human touch,' quite as strongly as any New York reporter, but he never overdoes his descriptions either material or spiritual. He just gives you the essence. In truth, he was a great journalist—a great reporter. He could write up almost anything from a pyramid to a paradox in metaphysic, and make what the profession in New York call a 'story,' and a very good story, out of almost anything. Take, for example, the exquisite and deeply moving tale of the child of Labda. It is the kind of copy which rarely reaches a newspaper office, but which, when it does, emotionalizes everybody from the editor to the office boy :

'As soon as the child of Labda was born, the

Corinthians sent ten of their number to the village where Eetion lived, with the purpose of killing the child. They duly reached Petra, and going into the court of Eetion's house asked for the baby. Labda had no idea of their intentions, and thinking that they were acting from goodwill to its father, brought the child and put it into the arms of one of them. Now they had agreed on the road that the one who first received the child should dash it to the ground. But it happened by a divine chance that the child smiled at the man who took it; and he, noticing it, was overcome by pity, and could not bring himself to destroy it. So he gave it to the second, and he to the third, till it passed through the hands of all the ten, and none of them would destroy it. Then they gave the child back to its mother and went outside. There they stopped at the gate, and began to blame and reproach each other, particularly the one to whom the child had been first given.'

What a story!—and curiously enough one which might happen any day on the Albanian and Greek frontier, or in Morocco. I remember hearing an appropriate tale when I was in Tangier thirty years ago. In order to stop a vendetta which had got beyond tolerance, a whole family were slaughtered. When they came to the baby in arms, who was very rickety, one of the women of the killing tribe called out, 'Leave that child alone. Don't you see that God has doomed him? You must not forestall God.' So the baby was saved and grew up a strong man. When he was twenty, some one told him his story, and then the vendetta passion fell on him, and he took to the hills to avenge his own people. And so the old feud began again. But I cannot write like Herodotus, even if I had as good a story to tell.

Note that, though Herodotus is so concise, there is no parade of the quality,—no jerkiness in the style,



no elimination in order to suggest terrific compression. Indeed, the manner of presentation appears to be perfectly leisurely and almost dull. When one reads a sentence like 'They duly reached Petra, and going into the court of Eetion's house asked for the baby,' one's first impulse is to say, 'How unnecessary to put it like that! Any fool could have saved ten or twelve words here, and given the sense just as well.' And yet the telling of the story benefits enormously by there being no appearance of hurry. Because there is no sense of being hurried, you have no sense of the narration being inadequate, and no wishing that the author had spared you a little more time, and so given you a little more enjoyment. You go away from these twenty lines perfectly satisfied, and feeling that it is one of the most moving and most human anecdotes in all literature. It might be amusing and useful if the instructors in the Schools of Journalism here and in America would set it to their pupils, with instructions to write the same story shorter and better. If any one went near succeeding, he should immediately be given a post of not less than five thousand dollars a year! He would be worth every penny of the salary.

IRONY

29th January 1924.—I am told that I myself—and still more this Diary—am too ironical. I would to Heaven this were so, for Irony in its true sense is a divine gift. It is the mark of a spirit who sees far and also sees clearly, who feels deeply the sense of tears in mortal things, but sees also that kindly, that divine humour in the universe which so often reconciles man to his destiny, while it appears to mock him. This was the true *Eironeia* of Socrates, of Greek

Tragedy, and also of those later thinkers to whose inspiring genius the name of 'Romantic Irony' has been given. He who would understand Irony in its noblest and truest sense must banish from his thought all idea of the pseudo-irony of later times. He must forgo that degraded sense of the word which makes *Eironeia* a smirking and satirical jade, with a hard, cruel laugh. Instead he must think of her as wearing that gentle smile of pity and humour, which teaches but does not deride, which redeems the human heart from its most profound discouragements, which may bring a remedy even to those to whom has suddenly come the dreadful revelation that things done can never be undone, that not even the gods upon the past have power, and that acts and their consequences are for all time inseparable. No one, in spite of Congreve's exquisite apostrophe, can backward tread the paths of fate. As well might you try to float up stream in a river. And so once again I come back to 'The River of Life'—a title which I adopted so light-heartedly, nay, so conventionally. I thought I had found what the publishers call a useful title. I soon discovered that I had got a master, not a mere shadow of a name. I find all roads lead to it. It dominates and directs me at every turn. Like Hippolytus in the play, its image is with me in the blaze of noon and in the shades of night. It is the end and it is everywhere.

#### A ROOSEVELT STORY

30th January 1924.—I keep politics out of this Diary altogether; but a friend of mine has just sent me a story in regard to Roosevelt, which is so striking and so characteristic, that I shall break my rule of numbering only non-political hours and give it. It

is a note of conversation which a very old and intimate friend of Roosevelt's had with him between the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the end of the war :

*Intimate Friend.*—‘ Theodore ! What would you have done if you had been President at the time ? ’

*Roosevelt.* ‘ What would I have done ? I should have sent Bernstorff his passports the same day that the advertisement was published warning people not to take passage by the *Lusitania*, then I should have sent the Secretary of War on board of her to England.’

Here spoke the true man of action—the man who reacts the moment he is struck morally or physically and hits back. The little men think it enough to stand on guard against a second blow. The big man knows that this is only to invite a new and fiercer attack. Either play the complete Quaker and fold your hands, or fall on the enemy like a thunderbolt from heaven. Brigham Young understood this. A friend asked him whether he would really follow Scripture and turn the other cheek to the smiter. ‘ Yes, I would,’ said the head of the Latter-Day Saints. ‘ But suppose he hit the other cheek. What would you do then ? ’ persisted the inquirer. ‘ Give him hell ! ’ Brigham Young knew man's nature. Different, but, at any rate, consequential to his form of extreme pacificism was the declaration of the Chinese Sage. ‘ What would you do,’ said one of his pupils, ‘ if a man spit in your face ? ’ While the Sage paused, an eager youth ‘ cut in ’ with the answer, ‘ Wipe it off ! ’ ‘ No, no,’ said the Master. ‘ That might tempt him to spit again. You must let it dry on.’ The Mormon view, in my opinion, is better, but the Roosevelt view the best. Acquiescence undoubtedly is a great temptation to evil men. That is why we must

punish. If we do not deter, we unquestionably tempt, or even incite to crime. But our deterrent punishment must be absolutely divorced from revenge, and must also be as far as possible reformatory. And so that long, low wail which rose from the island of dying men and women which floated for a little above the place where the *Lusitania* went down has brought me to the prison door—a door which should also have inscribed upon it, ‘Blessed are the merciful.’ There is no nobler virtue.

### CURRENCY

1st February 1924. My soul has been wandering of late in the strange paths of Currency, and now a friend reminds me how deeply and how amusingly Pope dealt with the question of metallic currency, gold as the standard of value, and, above all, the uses of paper money. He starts nobly with the gold issue :

P. You hold the word, from Jove to Momus giv’n,  
That man was made the standing jest of Heav’n,  
And gold but sent to keep the fools in play,  
For some to heap, and some to throw away.  
But I, who think more highly of our kind,  
(And surely Heav’n and I are of a mind),  
Opine that Nature, as in duty bound,  
Deep hid the shining mischief under ground :  
But when, by man’s audacious labour won,  
Flamed forth this rival to its sire the sun,  
Then careful Heav’n supplied two sorts of men,  
To squander these, and those to hide again.  
Like doctors thus, when much dispute has past,  
We find our tenets just the same at last :  
Both fairly owning riches, in effect,  
No grace of Heav’n, or token of th’ elect ;

Giv'n to the fool, the mad, the vain, the evil,  
To Ward, to Waters, Chartres, and the Devil.

*B.* What Nature wants, commodious gold bestows ;  
'Tis thus we eat the bread another sows.

*P.* But how unequal it bestows, observe ;  
'Tis thus we riot, while who sow it starve.  
What Nature wants (a phrase I must distrust)  
Extends to luxury, extends to lust.  
Useful, I grant, it serves what life requires,  
But dreadful too, the dark assassin hires.

*B.* Trade it may help, Society extend.

*P.* But lures the pirate, and corrupts the friend.

*B.* It raises armies in a nation's aid.

*P.* But bribes a senate, and the land's betray'd.  
In vain may heroes fight and patriots rave,  
If secret gold sap on from knave to knave.

Blest paper-credit ! last and best supply !  
That lends Corruption lighter wings to fly !  
Gold imp'd by thee can compass hardest things,  
Can pocket states, can fetch or carry kings.

A leaf, like Sibyl's, scatter to and fro  
Our fates and fortunes as the winds shall blow ;  
Pregnant with thousands flits the scrap unseen,  
And silent sells a king or buys a queen.  
Oh, that such bulky bribes as all might see,  
Still, as of old, incumbent'd villainy !  
Could France or Rome divert our brave designs  
With all their brandies or with all their wines ?  
What could they more than knights and squires  
confound,

Or water all the quorum ten miles round ?  
A statesman's slumbers how this speech would spoil !  
Sir, Spain has sent a thousand jars of oil ;  
Huge bales of British cloth blockade the door ;  
A hundred oxen at your levee roar.

## DESPERATE SAYINGS

1st February 1924. Bacon in his Essay on Revenge tells us :

‘ *Cosmus Duke of Florence* had a Desperate Saying, against Perfidious or Neglecting Friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable : ‘ *You shall reade* ’ (saith he) ‘ *that we are commanded to forgive our Enemies ; But you never read that we are commanded to forgive our Friends.*’

To call this ‘ a Desperate Saying ’ is a good example of Bacon’s dialectical skill. No man ever put things under their proper headings in properer fashion than he. There are cynical sayings, worldly sayings, evil sayings, and false sayings, but none of these descriptions exactly covers the ground covered by the description ‘ desperate ’—the sense of despair in mortal wisdom.

Of these Desperate Sayings, ever since I found that passage in Bacon, I have been a diligent collector. They are well worth the expenditure of a good deal of industry. The first thing to be noted about them is that they are rare. The field of search, however, is as long as the ages and as wide as mankind. They repay the collector just as do examples of rare plants or butterflies.

One of the next best to Bacon’s title-roll aphorism is Walpole’s saying as to Prime Ministers. I quote from memory, but there is no doubt about its authenticity. It is one of the sayings recorded by the Prime Minister’s son in his letters, and not only recorded, but also defended. What Walpole said was : ‘ There should be very few Prime Ministers. It is not good that many people should know how bad men are.’

There, indeed, is a Desperate Saying. Walpole's celebrated remark that 'he only knew one woman who would not take money, and she took diamonds,' though it comes very near, is not quite a Desperate Saying. It is rather a piece of satire. The same objection may be taken to Walpole's comment on the men who were bullying him in the House of Commons: 'All those men have their price.' It is true, however, that the way in which this House of Commons aphorism is usually quoted, 'All men have their price,' is a proper example of a Desperate Saying. The insertion of the word 'those,' by making it a charge against a particular set of political opponents, takes it out of the Baconian category.

A much nearer approximation to a Desperate Saying, though this one charms rather than makes the blood turn cold, is the alleged saying of the Prime Minister of one of the Dominions a couple of generations ago. The Minister in question was offered a large bribe. He indignantly refused it, but almost at once resigned. When asked by a friend why he had resigned at a moment when he had done so fine an act, he is alleged to have replied, 'They were getting too near my figure.'

A deeper and more tremendous example of a Desperate Saying is that of Halifax: 'Men must be saved in this world by their want of faith.' At the same time, it is not quite so desperate from Halifax as it would have been from anybody else. So complete was Halifax's devotion to esoteric Whiggism, that he regarded faith to be a form of Zealotry. But Zealotry was as a thing which would make no treaties or compromises, and so was a sure guide to destruction. The man of faith was bound for a fall. The man who had a reasonable want of faith was pre-

vented from rushing down the hill and breaking his head at the first stumble.

Another admirable example of the Desperate Saying which, by the way, often has in it an observation of some dreadful or inexplicable or horrible fact in connection with human nature rather than a theory, is the following : ‘ The dependence of a great man upon a greater is a subjection which lower men cannot easily comprehend.’ That is a very unpleasant fact, and one not, as a rule, well understood. Yet it is one which must have struck every one who has been an observer of public affairs at first-hand. In times of stress and difficulty, and when the crude facts of life stand out in all their nakedness, this disagreeable truth is strangely patent. Almost next door to this saying is one not, strictly speaking, desperate, but so able and conclusive that one is tempted to quote it : ‘ Popularity is a crime from the moment it is sought. It is only a virtue where men have it whether they will or no.’

Another really good example of the Desperate Saying is Halifax’s reflection : ‘ A man that could call everything by its right name would hardly pass the streets without being knocked down as a common enemy.’ Here is a passage from that greatest anatomy of human character ever conceived by the wit of man, Halifax’s character of Charles II. There is a whole nest of Desperate Sayings in the little chapter recounting Charles II.’s conduct to his Ministers :

‘ He had at least as good a Memory for the Faults of his Ministers as for their Services ; and whenever they fell, the whole Inventory came out ; there was not a slip omitted.’

As to the dangers to be suffered from Ministers turned out of office, Halifax indulges in a reflection



which we may feel sure has been the guiding star of many opportunist Prime Ministers :

‘ A Minister turned off is like a Lady’s Waiting-Woman, that knoweth all her Washes, and hath a shrewd guess at her Strayings : So there is danger in turning them off, as well as in keeping them.’

Finally, Halifax tells us that Charles’s ‘ humour of hearing everybody against anybody kept those about him in more awe than they would have been without it.’

A man who on one occasion at least came very near to Halifax in a Desperate Saying, drawn from life, was the great Lord Mansfield. Here is a story about him preserved by Wraxall, which is worth recording in full :

‘ Sir J. Macpherson was asked by Lord Mansfield what he thought of Mr. Pitt. “ I think, my Lord, that he is a great minister.” “ Ah, Sir John,” rejoined the judge in his peculiar voice, “ *a great little* minister. Did you ever hear, Sir John, of a minister prosecuting another minister ? Would a great minister have suffered Mr. Hastings to be arraigned ? ” “ Justice may have required it,” said Sir John. “ Justice, Sir John ; what is political justice ? Who is she ? Where is she ? Did you ever see her ? Do you know her colour ? Her colour is Blood ! I have administered justice for forty years, but that was justice between man and man. As to justice between one minister and another, I know not what it means.” ’

Though at first Mansfield’s view of political justice seems somewhat cryptic, it has only to be considered a little to be understood. We have seen plenty of such examples of political justice in recent times. If the colour was not actually blood, it has sometimes been very near it.

## NAPOLEON AT ELBA

*9th February 1924.*—Here is an entertaining account of an interview which a travelling Englishman had with Napoleon at Elba in 1815. The traveller in question was Lord Ebrington, the eldest son of Lord Fortescue. Lord Ebrington, who, by the way, was fascinated by Napoleon and thought him handsome, was a bit of a wit. Here is an excellent specimen of his manner of narration. It is to be found in Lady Franklin's Life :

‘ He (Napoleon) spoke of the Bourbons. He had no antipathy to them ; he might have poisoned them all in England, but he would not do it. But they were not calculated to be popular with a people like the French. Madame d’Angoulême, he had heard, was plain and awkward. “ Il fallait pour l’ange de la paix du moins une femme spirituelle ou jolie.” “ The King of England is a very good man, but he hates me.” “ Certainly,” said Lord Ebrington, “ he has never spoken well of you but once, when you had changed your wife. ‘ He has done a good thing,’ he said. ‘ Oh that I could change Charlotte.’ ” “ I never wished to conquer England or to be at war with her. I like the English.” “ It does not appear,” replied Lord Ebrington, “ else how came you to make all our poor travellers prisoners. What harm had they done you ? ” “ And how came you to make my poor merchants prisoners before the declaration of war ? I cared as much for my merchants as you for your travellers.” He said that he understood English, though he did not speak it, and had all the English papers. Lord Wellington was equal to any of his generals, if not superior. “ I believe it is now pretty well acknowledged that I am the best general in Europe, yet I make ten mistakes a day. *Ten*,” he repeated, holding up his fingers. Marmont’s treachery

to him was his final destruction. When he arrived at Paris and found it shut against him, he turned to Marmont, whose intentions he had heard of, and said, "I hear, Maréchal, you are to turn against me." He denied it firmly and the same night he set off. He believed he should have succeeded but for this. Moreau, a brave man, he had great regard for, but he was spoilt by his marriage. He loved his brother Lucien very much; he was the cleverest of all his brothers, but they quarrelled about his marriage. . . . He denied poisoning the wounded at Jaffa. "But there were a few, ten or twelve, wounded men whom I was obliged to leave there. The physicians had a consultation as to what was to be done with them, for they could not be moved, and the Turks are very cruel to prisoners, scooping out their eyes and torturing them in various ways. I said I would give no opinion, but if it were myself I should prefer taking a little opium to such a death. I asked how long they might live. They would hardly survive twenty-four hours was the answer. I said I would wait twenty-four hours. When the time was expired there were still two or three alive." Lord Ebrington asked how he came to remain six weeks at Moscow, which proved his ruin. "I consulted the thermometer records for the last thirty years, during all which period the frost had only twice set in within three weeks of the time it did that year. I don't object to being sent to England, but I won't go to St. Helena alive. The English newspapers say but one thing which is true of me, that I am writing my history. I am doing so." "

The young Englishman, we may note, ended up his conversation in a really delightful vein, which once again shows how permanent is our type. We can imagine a young Englishman from the University, if he could get to Petrograd, talking just in this style to Lenin or Trotsky :

" "I thought I should find you very stern and

severe," he said to Napoleon at the end of their talk. The Emperor's reply was characteristic. "Yes! the world does not know me. I am thought very violent, but I am not at all so naturally; I have been obliged to feign it to awe people. My portraits have never expressed my real character. They all represent the Emperor, not Napoleon." "

In fact, not a wolf but a lamb !!!

### MORE DESPERATE SAYINGS

*12th February 1924.*—Lately I gave some examples of Desperate Sayings. Here is another batch noted by me at various times. Now I have got the habit, they rise from the pages of the Memoirists like larks from the furrows.

Strange as it may seem, Dickens, who had in him a real touch of eloquence and might have been a great orator as well as a great humorist, once came very near to a Desperate Saying of high rhetorical quality. Jefferson's strange mixture of Jacobin political principles and a private life which exposed him to the accusation of being a Sultan with a black seraglio is said to have called forth from Dickens the following terrible apothegm: 'He dreamed of Liberty in the arms of a slave.'

Very near to a Desperate Saying, but not quite, was Dryden's tremendous distich which begins: 'Not even the Gods upon the past have power.'

As may be imagined, Napoleon's essentially anti-moral character coupled with a cynical regard of the world, and also with his love of those short sharp sayings which, as Bacon noted, 'fly abroad like darts,' made him say many desperate things. Perhaps the most conspicuous is the answer which he gave to the

Commissioners engaged in drawing up the Code Napoléon. They asked him whether any penalty was to be inserted in the Code for marital infidelity. His answer was to wave the whole thing away with an indifferent hand—‘*L’Adultère—c’est une affaire de Canapés.*’

Shakespeare, though himself so little of a cynic, had often occasion to put desperate things into the mouths of his characters, if and when his story or the interpretation of character required them. Perhaps one of the most terrible of these is the saying of the serving-man in *Coriolanus* in regard to peace. It will be remembered that, at the feast which is being prepared by the Volscians to commemorate the peace with Rome, one of the servitors remarks to another how terrible are the evils of peace. The second servitor replies : ‘ This peace is nothing but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad-makers.’ To this the first servitor adds the soul-shaking comment : ‘ Ay, and it makes men hate one another.’ That is desperate enough in all conscience, but we are not sure that the comment of the third servitor is not even more desperate : ‘ Reason : because they then less need one another.’

Compare Bacon’s dread ‘ Psalm of Life ’ :

‘ Wars with their noise affright us. When they cease  
We are worse in Peace.’

Some of the sayings of Shakespeare about death are desperate. Perhaps the most poignant is that in *Cymbeline*, where the jailor says to the optimistically inclined prisoner in the condemned cell : ‘ Your death has eyes in ’s head then ; I have not seen him so pictured.’

A French example of a Desperate Saying which I have included in my collection is the *mot fatal* of

Barnave. When, as he believed, or pretended to believe, far too much fuss was being made about the killing of Foulon and Berthier, he asked the question, 'Le sang qui vient de se répandre était-il donc si pur ?'—'Was this blood now shed so marvellously pure that you make such a rout about it ?'

A peculiarly Desperate Saying is that which Bacon, in perhaps the most brilliant of his non-scientific writings, quotes from Plato—the hopeless saying of the Cretan Clinias. Socrates and his interlocutors were talking of just the sort of things we talk of now—of peace and how to insure it, of the interaction of the interests of States great and small, and generally of what we now call internationalism. And then the Cretan cuts in with a thought so chilling, yet so plausible, that it is difficult to avoid the feeling, 'Perhaps, after all, what the wretch says is true.' Here is Bacon's version of the conversation :

'Clinias the Candian, in Plato (*i.e.* in *The Laws*), speaks desperately and wildly, as if there were no such thing as peace between nations, but that every nation expects but his advantage to war upon another. But yet in that excess of speech there is thus much that may have a civil construction, namely, that every state ought to stand upon its guard, and rather prevent than be prevented. His words are : "*That which men for the most part call peace, is but a naked and empty name ; but the truth is, that there is ever between all estates a secret war.*"'

It is clear that even the cold and callous heart of Bacon was perturbed by the horrible aphorism of Clinias, for he keeps on turning it over in his mind and trying to find a means for rejecting the conclusion of the Cretan. It is curious also to note in regard to this Desperate Saying, that only one other thing is known of its author. According to Jowett,

he stands forth in another part of the *Dialogues* as the apologist of the unnatural practices which defaced the social life of the Greeks.

Goethe said, incidentally, as might be expected, one or two desperate things, even when he was trying to be specially pious and virtuous. Take, for example, the following as to conscience :

‘The man who acts never has any conscience ; no one has any conscience but the man who thinks.’

There is a saying of the poet about Timon, which is evidently desperate, though I confess it is difficult to get the exact meaning :

‘Some one asked Timon about the education of his children. “Let them,” he said, “be instructed in that which they will never understand.”’

Take again, in this context, two remarks which have nothing to do with each other except juxtaposition :

‘There are many men who fancy they understand whatever they experience.’ ‘The public must be treated like women : they must be told absolutely nothing but what they like to hear.’

Perhaps the following is not actually a Desperate Saying, but it is an important one :

‘People have to become really bad before they care for nothing but mischief, and delight in it.’

Another of Goethe’s aphorisms is very near the point of Desperation :

‘It does not look well for Monarchs to speak through the Press, for power should act and not talk. The projects of the Liberal Party always bear being read : the man who is overpowered may at least

express his views in speech, because he cannot act. When Mazarin was shown some satirical songs on a new tax, "Let them sing," said he, "as long as they pay."

I may make here an interrogatory suggestion. Are there not a certain number of idiomatic riddling sayings like the oracles, which, because they may be read in one or two ways, are desperate, or at any rate have that quality of desperateness that they alarm our minds even though we do not understand them? A capital example is afforded by poor Montezuma's last words, 'The Gods are athirst.' It is not susceptible of any exact interpretation. Yet it represents most poignantly the agony of the poor man who, till the Spaniard came, honestly thought he was a God himself and acted as a God. But this is a subject that would carry me too far.

One of the most terrible of all Desperate Sayings is that which Fletcher put into the mouth of Valentinian when the woman whom the Emperor so vilely, so cruelly, and so tyrannically wronged tells him in her agony that she will appeal to Justice. He answers her with the dreadful arrogance of the man in whose iron hand the awful precepts of the Roman Code had clenched 'the thunders of the law': 'Justice will never hear you. I am Justice.' (*Voluntas principis vigorem legis habet*—The will of the Sovereign has the force of law.)

I have kept as my last Desperate Saying one from a source which seems not merely unlikely but impossible. It was uttered by a Middle-Victorian humorist who addressed himself chiefly to the middle-class, and was in his own person one of the most virtuous and respectable of men, the inventor of *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures*!—Douglas Jerrold. The saying was published during the Socialistic ferment of the



'forties: 'Ah yes, we're all brothers now—all Cains and Abels.'

As a postscript, I think I have succeeded in collecting the most Desperate Saying of all. No doubt its desperateness is amazingly enhanced by the dreadful primness of the language, and by the fact that the man who perpetrated it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and that he perpetrated it in his old age, only some eight years before his death. One feels after reading it that the 'slightly damaged archangel,' as Lamb called him, must have been very badly damaged somewhere, and damaged quite early and never repaired.

'To be feminine, kind, and genteelly dressed, these were the only things to which my head, heart, or imagination had any polarity, and what I was then, I still am.'

## THE ROMAN EMPERORS

*1st March 1924.* I expect that there are many discoveries yet to be made by the general reader among Greek and Roman authors. We hear a great deal about the 'high' people, but very little about the minor prophets. Now I shrewdly suspect that the scholars have on a punctilio been keeping us from a great many delightful and charming books with their sneers about the Silver or even the Brass Age. When I hear some man of learning say that a book is 'unreliable' or 'written in vile Latin,' or that it shows 'signs of decadence from the best standard, as regards both thought and language,' I suspect that it is very likely some charming gossipy book which I am being censored out of by a grammarian. That is a thought which fills my mind with rage and horror.

I have just discovered an example of this intrigue amongst scholars and grammarians to keep me and a good book apart and make ill blood between us. The immediate case is the *Scriptores Augustae*, or *Anecdotal Memoirs of the Roman Emperors*. I had always heard the book damned as badly written, untrustworthy, and generally a hodgepodge of inexactitudes, worthy of neither credit nor attention. When, then, Vol. I. of the three in preparation reached me in the Loeb Library, I had no intention of reading it. I turned up my nose at it as 'unworthy the consideration of the scholar and the gentleman.' Happily a wet day, a cold in the head, and a whimsical impulse induced me to read it. I was transported. It is one of the most delightful, curious, and amusing collections of anecdotes about great men and great things that have ever been written. Gossip it may be, but it is gossip of the kind that makes the great people of antiquity live. They come down from their marble pedestals and take you by the hand. Here is the key to unlock the pompous mysteries of the Caesars, their Augustas, their Senators, Consuls and Praetors. You get, for example, in touch with the real Marcus Aurelius, and by no means to his discredit. Hadrian, with his love of going to the tops of mountains and seeing sunrises—an excellent gift in an Emperor—grows human. Pertinax and Commodus cease to be names. In fact, this whole crowd of half-Emperors and quarter-Emperors become, not shadows and phantoms, but people very much alive.

Scattered up and down are admirable epigrams and pregnant sayings. I will take only two examples: that of the Emperor who instituted small dinner parties and formulated the proposition: 'Seven make a dinner; more make a din.' The Latin is quite as

neat to the ear as the English. Take, too, the Desperate Saying of Hadrian, who remarked (doubtless with an imperial sigh) that precautions against usurpers were of little avail. ‘*No man can kill his successor.*’

Then the intimate pictures, like that of Septimus Severus, the shrewd lights on Faustina, the delicate problem of the bringing up of Princes, and the awful paradox that great men are almost always succeeded by ‘duds’ or scoundrels. I have absolutely covered two pages at the end of my copy of the *Scriptores* with the numbers of pages on which there is something specially good, and there is hardly room for another entry. On the next re-reading I shall have to take refuge on the title-page.

Before I leave this amazingly delightful book I feel I must quote a passage on the two eternal questions which haunt alike the palace, the house in Westbourne Terrace, the eight-roomed villa and the cottage. Those are : (1) the best education for the children ; and (2) the hot-water system and the baths. The description of the teaching of Commodus Antoninus under the directions of Marcus Aurelius and what it led to, is one of the bitterest pieces of satire, though not so intended, that was ever written. After the death of Antoninus, Marcus Aurelius tried to educate Commodus, not only by his own teaching—poor scholar, poor teacher—but also by employing the greatest and best of men and experts alive in the Empire. In Greek literature, as in Latin, Commodus had the noblest and the ablest of masters. Such are the facts. Here is the comment of Ælius Lampridius :

‘ However, teachers in all these studies profited him not in the least—such is the power, either of natural character, or of the tutors maintained in a palace.

For even from his earliest years he was base and dishonourable, and cruel and lewd, defiled of mouth, moreover, and debauched. Even then he was an adept in certain arts which are not becoming in an Emperor, for he could mould goblets, and dance and sing and whistle, and he could play the buffoon and the gladiator to perfection. In the twelfth year of his life, at Centumcellae, he gave a forecast of his cruelty. For when it happened that his bath was drawn too cool, he ordered the bathkeeper to be cast into the furnace; whereupon the slave who had been ordered to do this burned a sheep-skin in the furnace, in order to make him believe by the stench of the vapour that the punishment had been carried out.'

Another wonderful description is that of Pertinax, of whom we are told that he was so mean that 'before he was made Emperor he used to serve at his banquets lettuce and the edible thistle in half-portions.' We seem here to reach the very abysm of dietary squalor. Foreign hotels please do not copy! Another of his peculiarities is worth recording. Even after he was made Emperor, 'he never ate pheasants at his own banquets or sent them to others.' What he did with them does not appear! Perhaps nobody ever gave him any, and he was too little of a sportsman to shoot his own coverts. But then he was not one of the Emperors who lived in the grand style. Quite the contrary. As the writer of his anecdotal history says, 'he did not wish to seem other than he really was,' which was a rather punctilious, fussy, close-fisted little business man:

'On the other hand, he was so stingy and eager for money that even after he became Emperor he carried on a business at Vada Sabatia through agents, just as he had done as a private citizen. And despite his efforts, he was not greatly beloved; certainly, all who talked freely together spoke ill of Pertinax, calling him

the smooth-tongued, that is, a man who speaks affably and acts meanly. In truth, his fellow-townsmen, who had flocked to him after his accession, and had obtained nothing from him, gave him this name. In his lust for gain, he accepted presents with eagerness.'

## MUSIC AND THE UNMUSICAL

16th March 1924.—The first thought of the man who has no sense of music is to keep his mouth shut after he has been to a musical performance. I am told, however, that a sincere statement of the impact of a performance like that of *Parsifal* on a non-musical mind might be of some interest to musical people. I shall attempt, therefore, to set down some of the thoughts that crowded my mind when I heard *Parsifal* for the first time. So might a colour-blind man write on Turner or any other great colourist. Such a view would admittedly be curious.

I do not feel called upon to deal with the scenery, dresses, and general *décor*, except to ask in wonder why it should be a Wagnerian tradition, as apparently it is, to mark a situation as specially emotional by painting everything ginger colour, whether it be the sky or the flowers that bloom in enchanted gardens. But if the scenery is bad, what are we to say of the story itself? To speak frankly, its effect upon me is one of wearisomeness and disgust. The handling of the whole situation is tactless, tasteless, senseless, soulless. The Arthurian legend, though too often spoilt by the Celtic faults of dimness and essential inhumanity, has in itself much that is noble and stimulating. But what can be said for this German-silver, electro-plated version of the story of the Grail? There is no nature and there is no art, no true mystery,

no divine illusion, only a glitter of machine-made magic.

But, after all, what does scenery or story or plot or literary handling matter here? The music is the thing, and that seems to me wholly inspired, wholly divine, a faultless, flawless work, rising higher and higher, and showing everywhere that absolute certainty of touch, that harmony not merely in the musical but in the highest sense, which marks all great achievement in the arts. It moves throughout with 'pomp of waters unwithstood.' Like some mighty river it sweeps every obstacle, every criticism before it. You feel that the composer not only wrote from a full heart, but from a full mind, and that he had complete control over his material. He was never 'finely touched' but to 'fine issues,' never had to rely upon rhetoric to eke out invention, or upon convention to supply the place of imagination. He rules everywhere a king. All the gates open before him, and every head is bowed. It is possible that Wagner does not do everything that his hearers may want or ask, but he does what from the point of view of a work of art is more important—he does exactly what he himself wants. There is no pity, no sense of tears over an artistic tragedy, no sense of failure. The perfection of the music is almost uncanny.

The non-musical man might be expected to obtain his greatest pleasure from the vocal music. Strangely enough, I found just the reverse to be the case. I was most rapt into the Wagnerian heaven of sound in the orchestral pieces, and, above all, in the Prelude. There Music seemed to me to have done her greatest, there to riot and revel, there to wave her purple wing. Surely no nobler note of preparation was ever sounded. In an instant one is swept away in what one must not call a storm of emotion—for

storm denotes violence, and here was nothing of stress or heat or friction, but only the rolling back of mists and the opening of windows into the empyrean ; only what may quiet us in a scene so noble. All that one had ever thought, or heard, or dreamt, or imagined of the pageantry, of the pomp, of the sensuous emotion of religion is concentrated and refined into an elixir of sound. The glory of all cathedral chants, of all sweet singing in the choir, of all the space and majesty of architecture have come together, and all the arts upon which they relied have been fused into one pathetic magnificence. The emotions that crowd in on the mind as one enters from the sunlight into the gloom of the Duomo at Milan, the jewelled glories of St. Mark's, the stone miracle of Amiens, the lucent beauties of the Sainte Chapelle, the vast spaces of St. Peter's, and all the thousand associations of English ministers and cathedrals, are here blended and refined. Interlaced with them are the inspirations that centre in the services of some village church in England with its grey walls set in the greenery of a Somerset or Devon landscape, and where the elms and yews bend benign over the swelling graves. But one wrongs the musician by talking too much of such glories. He goes to the heart as well as travels along the radiant surface. There is plenty of room, too, for the thought of the singing in some humble Welsh or Cornish chapel. From that by an easy transition one passes to the memory of those ' who rolled the psalm to wintry skies ' or to Cromwell's Ironsides :

' Their heads all stooping low,  
Their points all in a row——'

as they raised their hymn to the God of battles. And soon one realizes that such a suggestion in the music is no accident. Across the organ-like tones and

pealing anthems come the notes of war, the blare of trumpets, the menace of thunder and eclipse. The hosts of heaven and the powers of darkness are engaged, and fierce is the combat. But that is only an episode. The reverberation of trumpet and drum and cymbal die away, and the prelude ends as it began, in a 'solemn music,' and in the antiphons of religion. Once more we drink the ten-times-distilled elixir and feel the breathless rapture of devotion. Surely never has musician succeeded more than here in giving us the extreme characteristic impression of the thing he wants us to feel. We are transported. Our souls are called out of our bodies, though not for our bale, like Kundry's. We stand discarnate in the rays of a beatific vision.

#### PROBLEMS AND PERILS OF SPIRITUALISM

30th March 1924. I have been all my life a keen student of psychical phenomena, with the result that I have always felt compelled to maintain the middle course. I have come to the conclusion, that is, that the spiritualistic hypothesis has not been proved. On the other hand, I am convinced as to the complete failure of the materialists, and even of the true agnostics, to overthrow, explain, or rationalize what Mr. Balfour once called the 'odd facts' unearthed by psychical inquiry. These are the facts for which we have good evidence, but which, whatever may be their explanation, do not fit in with so-called scientific views of the universe,—which remain, what are so greatly abhorred by the men of science, *i.e.* mysteries. The man of science, rightly enough from his point of view, levies war on all that is mystical. He believes that there is a reason for everything and that the things which cannot at the



moment be explained or even understood, are not mysteries, but, instead, explainable things, though things that have not yet been explained. Everything, he thinks, has what Shakespeare called 'understood relations,' or, to be more correct, 'understandable relations.' And here is my breaking-point. I will make no positive assumption that everything is understandable. I agree, of course, that if we get better instruments of observation, or train our senses to be better observers, we shall get more accurate reports. Further, I feel that I cannot remain what Prior called 'lord of his new hypothesis.' The law of the Golden Bough teaches me that the Priest of Science will be slain by 'the slayer who shall himself be slain.' Therefore investigation, investigation, and more investigation, must be the watchword. While incommensurables and other apparent mysteries are knocking about the world, we must go on investigating them and not be put off by such cheap answers or arguments as those which are commonly used in regard to psychic research. 'It is all imposture and not worth considering.' If that had been the line which the chemists had adopted in regard to the alchemists, we should know precious little about chemistry. It is nonsense in the problems of psychical research to bring in all sorts of suggestions as to morals and experiments being tainted by fraud. An experiment may be spoilt by the use of dirty water or some other impurity, but that does not make the chemist break his test-tubes and scales, and say that the business is too disgusting for him, and that he is going to go out of it as quickly as he can. Instead, he takes every precaution to prevent his experiments being haunted by the impurities, but continues as before to investigate.

So with psychic phenomena. We must not, because

one experiment is spoilt by the impurities of fraud, say, 'We will conduct no more inquiries.' I have been specially struck by the unscientific way in which the question of alleged spiritual messages conveyed in automatic writing has been treated by what I may call the harsher scientists. They seem extraordinarily ready to assume that, because messages purporting to be from the dead often come to us in very twaddly language and full of expressions of vulgar transcendentalism such as the alleged communicator could not possibly have used, therefore automatic writing is necessarily a fraud. Mr. Jones, the fastidious physicist, says bitterly: 'It is quite impossible that my old friend Ravenhead could have talked 'tosh' of this kind. Such words and phrases would have choked him. Therefore I refuse to have anything more to do with these investigations.' And yet, curiously enough, if Mr. Jones gets a cryptic telephonic message about a lecture engagement and why it had to be postponed, he does not say that the message must be a fraud because of its ignorant and absurd employment of technical terms. Instead he says, 'I suppose the muddle happened something in this way. Darkshield no doubt told the man who looks after his laboratory for him to telephone to the College putting me off, and then the under-porter, who had to write the message down. Being an ass, he did not understand the reason given about the lecture on Electrons clashing, and so between them they produced this terrible hash. I can see quite well, however, what old Darkshield was trying to get through, and have made the new arrangements he wanted accordingly.'

Though we make these allowances in real life, we never seem willing to make them in the case of messages alleged to come from the dead. Take another

analogy in ordinary life. We do not assume that the great scholar, O'Leary, cannot have written a review because it has three false quantities in what purports to be a quotation from the *Æneid* and some rubbish about Petronius's work on the Statisticians. It reads like madness, but we only say that we wish he would have his stuff typewritten before he sends it in and then the printers would not make him the apparent author of these absurd, grotesque blunders. It does not occur to us for a moment that we are dealing with a case of imposture. Surely the dismissal of automatic writing or other messages alleged to be from dead persons is too often founded on the assumption that fraud can be the only explanation of blunders. I admit the dreary folly and apparent impossibility of quantities of these messages ; but I do want people to try and consider scientifically, and in a reasonable spirit, the way in which these messages reach us, or, at any rate, are alleged to reach us.

In order to explain my view, I have tried to draw a picture—a kind of day-dream—of the difficulties under which communication would have to take place in the case of the disembodied. If the dead could stand before us in their habit as they lived and could talk to us man to man, there should be no difficulty in the matter. But assuming for the moment that in fact they can only send messages through other people, *i.e.* through ' mediums,' it is a very different matter.

And here I ought to interpolate that we have no right to lay down the way in which the dead ought to communicate and say that if they do not communicate in the way we think reasonable they are impostors. We need not assume that the medium's way is the only way, but we must not refuse to investigate it as, *per se*, impossible.

Before, however, I set forth my parable of communication, I must touch for a moment on the subject of identification. As far as I can see, nobody has ever thought out exactly how we identify each other in ordinary life. I meet Smith in the road and there is, as a rule, no doubt or question about it being Smith. I know his coat and I know his hat. I know the sound of his voice, and I note as usual how untidy he looks compared with what he looked in pre-war days. All the same, it is probably not by these mechanical and material tests that I know him, but by some kind of *aura* breathed from him, whatever that may be. Perhaps subconsciously I go through a regular process of ratiocination—Roman nose, bald, overhanging upper lip, slight stoop of the shoulders, and other police description details as to appearance, voice, and clothes, and then add the conclusion, ‘In view of the aforesaid premises I draw the inference that it is Abraham Percival Smith and not John James Jones.’ If, however, I am deprived of these various modes of recognition and have to obtain recognition, not out of the timbre of a voice, or some sudden little jerk of the head or finger, which was unmistakably Smith’s, I might find great difficulty in identifying him. If on a totally dark road comes a distant shout, ‘Is that you, Bill? This is me, Smith. I’ve lost my way and turned my ankle, come across and give me a hand,’ you are very apt to feel cold doubts as to the identity of your alleged friend.

My next entry shall be the Day-dream *in extenso*.

## A PARABLE FOR PSYCHICAL INVESTIGATORS

*31st March 1924.*—Granted that the channels of communication are what they are, granted also that it is impossible to express the unknown in terms of the known, and granted further the imperfect working of the human brain when it is subject to the shock of personal emotion, we must not expect lucidity in communications from the spirit world, and especially in Automatic Writings. On the contrary, we should naturally expect a somewhat opaque mixture. Whether that mixture is what many people think it is, and whether we shall learn to clarify it, or whether it is an illusion of the brain exploited by man's power of self-deception assisted by baser influences, remains to be seen. But in any case, though there are, of course, certain dangers, it is right and reasonable to investigate the phenomena, or alleged phenomena, as long as they are investigated in a scientific spirit. No one proposes to stop chemical inquiry because foolish people may poison themselves or blow themselves up. Similarly, provided the dangers are understood, psychic investigation ought not to be forbidden or hindered merely because certain psychological and moral risks attach thereto.

Let us suppose a son to have left home on an exploratory expedition into the heart of the Andes, an expedition accompanied by risks so great that his family have almost given up the hope of ever receiving any communication from him again. The son, however, survives the dangers and difficulties of his journey and arrives safely at the capital of Bolivia. Here he finds that an American inventor has just perfected a new system of long-distance wireless telephony, but one which it is alleged cannot at present

be worked except through the inventor's two experts at La Paz and in London. In order, that is, to get a communication through, the would-be telephoner must stand by the wireless expert and give him the message, and he in turn must give it to the wireless expert in London. The wireless expert in London must then pass it on to the father, who has been brought to the office to hear the message. This means that the message would have to be conveyed in a conversation such as that which follows:—*Son to Operator at La Paz*: 'Tell my father that I am here, and that I want him to know that I am safe and well.'—*Operator in London to Father*: 'The La Paz operator says I am to tell you that your son says he is alive and well,' etc., etc. A simple message of that kind is perhaps not very difficult to get through, and is not much hindered by the method of communication. But now suppose that the father, who has been summoned to the wireless office in London, is inclined to be somewhat suspicious of the new invention and very doubtful whether it is really his son who is communicating—suspects, in fact, that the whole thing is a fraud. Suppose, further, that he is predisposed to adopt this attitude because he has heard of other people who have been grossly deceived and robbed of money and of happiness through impostors working an alleged invention of a similar kind. Even though he would like beyond anything else in the world to know that his son was alive and was communicating with him, he would feel it necessary to be sceptical. The very intensity of his desire to be assured of his son's safety would make him brace himself to defeat any idea of deception. He cannot simply accept the statements reeled off by the two operators, but must endeavour to get immediate proof that the communication is genuine.

Therefore he at once clamours for something which shall have evidential value. This, he feels, is absolutely necessary. But it is just here that the trouble of this system of communication begins. The father demanding proof has to convey his inquiries through the minds of the two operators, and has to switch the interview off plain assertions on to identification lines. But unfortunately these operators are not able to make their own minds act automatically and like a machine. Neither can entirely resist the temptation to help out and improve the communication—to make short-cuts, as they would say ;—in fine, to help the father and son to get together. They cannot help their own minds developing, clarifying, and improving, and so interpreting the expressions of the man on the other side.

Be this as it may, there is no other way but to set going the memories of the father and of the son in order to establish the identity of the traveller. And a bewildering business it is.

*Father to London Operator:* ‘Can you get him to tell me something which, though not at the moment known to me, is known to other people, in order that I can verify it? This will show that it is my son who is talking and not an impostor. Make this quite clear. He must say something which I shall not be bound to regard as a mere guess.’

In these circumstances, and especially if the son had never thought of identification proofs before, he may very well take some incident in his life which he has partially forgotten, or, at any rate, one where his recollection has diverged a good deal from the recollection of others, and give it in such a way that it would distinctly suggest fraud or else total ignorance. And even if something of real evidential value did appear to emerge, it might easily be so much clouded

by having to go through two operators to whom the incident seemed pure nonsense that it would lose its relevance.

But what are we to say if, after inconclusive evidence of identity, the traveller—quite as deeply anxious to communicate with his father as the father with him—were next to try, by means of the distracting mechanism we have described, to get through some account of the strange and soul-shaking experiences which he had undergone in his voyage of exploration? Suppose he had made a wonderful discovery, had found a city inhabited by an entirely new race—a people endowed with wonderful powers, talking a new language, with a new scheme of thought, and possessed of psychical powers far superior to and wholly different in kind as well as in degree from ours, people with a totally divergent attitude towards life and death, and, further, who lived under different physical conditions from ours.

He would be passionately anxious to get some account of these wonders into his father's mind, but at once he would be perplexed with the difficulty of describing the unknown in terms of the known. Ought we to be surprised if in view of these facts the description—though it might contain one or two unaccountable flashes—were to seem vague and occasionally ridiculous, and if the communications became dashed with doubt and hesitation, and often appeared mean and absurd just where one might most expect them to be full of moment and dignity?

Yet surely these unsatisfactory circumstances should not make a wise man say in a pet that he refuses to listen to any more messages. Rather it should make a reasonable person say that we must not expect perfection all in a moment from the Andean wireless system, or look to a half-developed invention for a



limpid stream of exposition concerning the wonders of a new discovery !

The system of communication I have described in my explanatory Parable, if not analogous in every particular to those which take place in real life, is, I think, sufficiently like to be of service to the investigator. As a rule, there is a 'sensitive' who goes into something in the nature of a trance and an alleged spirit control, or, as I should say, operator on the other side, who purports to put messages through, usually in the *oratio obliqua*, 'He says that, etc.,' but often broken in upon by verbatim reports, 'I do wish, Father, etc.,' this being again interrupted by *sotto voce* explanatory comments by the spirit medium—*i.e.* the medium at the son's end—and by interlarded scraps of dialogue between certain spirit interlocutors who 'cut in.' Finally, there are apt to be raids on the conversations by other influences on the spirit side.

To people who have never studied the matter in detail, this muddle may seem to lead to nothing but a hopeless fog. Yet, curiously, out of this very muddle come in many cases some of the most impressive indications that we are dealing with realities and not mere folly or fraud. One occasionally catches, or once again let me say, since I do not want to beg the question, appears to catch, the mediums in the spirit world guessing at the communication which is being made, and guessing wrong—trying to improve the message and spoiling it. Yet all the time the friend or relative, or other sitter, owing to the use of his own memory and logical faculty, has been able to see far quicker and better than the medium what the spirit communicator is driving at.

Suppose, for instance, a spirit medium were to say :  
'He says something I cannot quite make out about

a lady biting him when he was a little boy—a lady, he says, called Smith. Do you remember it?’ This, of course, would sound utter nonsense to an intermediary. Yet it may be the best of good sense if Ladysmith were the name of the family dog. But remember, though I want to make people realize how difficult the system of communication must be if it is to be evidential, and also how difficult if it is to tell us of things so unknown that they cannot be hitched on to any known thing here, without something approaching intellectual dislocation, I do not want to be dogmatic on psychical phenomena, or beg the question in any sort of way either for or against. I present my little parable only to elucidate. At the most my plea is a motion in arrest of judgment! I merely ask the Court of Appeal to delay its decision till it has weighed certain new evidence.

#### ‘THE TIRED AUNT AND THE CURSING NIECE’

1st April 1924.—Here is a story conveyed to me by a friend. Whether fact, fiction, or *ben trovato*, it is certainly an excellent example of the way in which children mistake and also often delightfully amplify and beautify language that they find unintelligible. My friend tells me that the other day a little girl friend of his, aged five, to whom he was very fond of reading and reciting in prose and verse, asked him with great seriousness to tell her ‘the grand poetry’ about ‘the tired aunt and the cursing niece.’ Bewilderment for a moment overcame him, and he could not think how to fulfil the command, and asked for further instructions. ‘Don’t you know that “grand poetry” you sometimes tell me about

the tired aunt?’ And then he suddenly remembered and began :

‘The tyrant of the Chersonese  
Was freedom’s best and bravest friend.’

The sonorous rhythm of ‘The Isles of Greece’ had made a greater impact than the sense. It was, in fact, the old story about ‘the child she-bear.’ Say it aloud and impressively and at once Tyrant=Tired Aunt, and Chersonese=Cursing Niece.

I daresay readers of these words will be able to afford other examples of these attractive misapprehensions. I remember an old friend telling me that as a boy when he read in ‘The Acts of the Apostles’ how Agrippa and Berenice came with great pomp, he always imagined that they came to the judgment-seat accompanied by a large Newfoundland dog. One of his acquaintances had a Newfoundland called ‘Pompey’ for grand, and ‘Pomp’ for short.

Here again are some capital examples of that art of getting comprehension out of the incomprehensible in which children are such adepts.

A little girl, aged seven, came out of church one Sunday and turned to her mother and said, ‘Mummy, what is Lork?’ The mother did not know. Dulcie persisted, ‘*What* is Lork? The clergyman says every Sunday, “The Duck in the corner and Lork.” Of course I understand what the Duck in the corner is, but what is Lork?’ After deep thought came the conclusion that ‘the Duck in the corner and Lork’ was ‘the Duchess of Cornwall and York.’ This happened, of course, twenty years ago.

When catechizing in his parish schools, a clergyman once asked an intelligent little girl to recite the Apostles’ Creed, which she did correctly until—‘I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy calico shirt. . . .’

I suppose a pedant would say that the *locus classicus* for these nominal misapprehensions is the passage in Erasmus about 'Mumpsimus,' the old Priest, and the young Priest.

### THE LOVE POEMS OF JOHN DONNE

1st May 1924.—I have never understood Donne's poems; I have never even tried to do so. Yet when I was an undergraduate, or even before, I used to carry a little edition of Donne in my pocket, and shout his verses to the woods and fields, or bombard my expostulating friends with enigmatical couplets and quatrains that had gone to my head like new wine. My fellow-undergraduates, I believe, warned each other 'not to talk to Strachey about Donne. He's quite impossible when he gets on to Donne, perfectly mad.' However, though my love for Donne was quite uncritical, it was altogether genuine. In those days Donne was little talked about—by which I mean that there was no temptation to 'show off' one's learning by quoting Donne. Showing off in the 'eighties, strange as it may sound now, consisted in knowing Rossetti's Sonnets by heart, or in being able to expound Morris and Swinburne at call.

Advancing years made me, I suppose, a little ashamed of reading a poet to whose words I could attach little or no meaning. Also journalism, the cares of the world, and the fact that many new stars were rising, drove Donne into the background. The most I did was to repeat some of my favourite lines and to prick up my ears whenever I came upon an allusion to Donne in Dryden, in Pope, in Dr. Johnson, or elsewhere.

And now Mr. 'V. M.,' the editor of the new Donne,

'Has made the ancient torrent moan,  
Although its very source be dry.'

I have re-read all the love poems in my old copy of the 1669 edition. I find with a pride which I am not going to conceal that, when at eighteen I marked the poems as if for a selection, I made almost exactly the same selection as 'V. M.' On the fly-leaf of my book appears this momentous note :

'Poems marked thus || are beautiful throughout.

'Poems marked thus †† are marred by some piece  
of bad writing.'

The only essential difference between me and 'V. M.' is that I marked as for a general anthology, and he—or is it she?—includes only love poetry. For example, I left in the elegy which begins :

'Language, thou art too narrow and too weak  
To ease us now. Great sorrows cannot speak,'

and also Ben Jonson's favourite elegy, which begins :

'Not that in colour it was like thy hair.'

Again, I included, because of its delightful first line, the curious little poem written to Ben Jonson on 6th January 1603. It is quite eighteenth-century in its opening :

'The State and men's affairs are the best plays,  
Next yours. . . .'

But I now come to a confession, which I have perhaps staved off too long. In my new resurrectionary festival I find myself falling back exactly into my old bad habit of devouring indigestible poetry, unchewed. I read Donne once more without understanding, and yet once more with an intoxicated delight in the

metrical fascination and in the indefinable charm of the rhetoric. The lines that I loved forty-eight years ago leap out at me from the page as if they were alive. They and I clasp hands across the gulf of the past, just as do friends of school and college meeting by chance at a railway junction, in a Swiss hotel, or in the Suez Canal. Strange as it may seem, I have not been forced to say about a single line in Donne that for me there has passed a glory from the verse. 'I see and I perish' exactly as before. Exactly as before I behave as what a friend once called me, 'the wild beast of literature.' I tear my prey to pieces, and in the glorious lust of hunger do not even ask myself why I like what I am devouring.

I must for the sake of the weaker, or, let me say, the saner brethren, give some examples of what I mean. Take first these exquisite lines :

'Ah, what a trifle is a heart,  
If once into love's hands it come !'

That is quite enough for me. I ask to know no more. I well remember living on it for a month forty-eight years ago without even bothering myself to explain away the ridiculous end of the quatrain. I don't suppose I ever read, and certainly was not in the least put off by, the awful lines :

'. . . but as love draws ;  
He swallows us, and never chaws.'

Such things not only never worried me, but never even interested me.

Take next the alluring couplet :

'Stand still, and I will read to thee  
A lecture, Love, in love's philosophy.'

The poem attached is, of course, very well known, and has, I believe, got into the anthologies. It

happens to be the kind of poetry *now popular* with 'the better vulgar' of letters. This is the poem which contains the pretty conceit about how the two shadows that went up and down with the lovers in their three hours' converse got shorter and shorter.

'The Autumnal' was, I think, the only poem of Donne's that I got entirely by heart, for practically there are no 'trip up' lines in it, and the special intonation or lilt given to the couplet is one which would naturally inflame a lover of metre purely for its own sake, as I take no shame to proclaim myself. A similar commendation was always paid by me to Donne's elegy to his wife. It perhaps opens as well as any poem in the whole range of literature :

'By our first strange and fatal interview.'

This also is the poem, it will be remembered, that contains the immortal phrase :

'. . . I saw him go  
O'er the white Alps alone. . . '

'The Legacy,' a poem dark, dangerous, and unintelligible, has two lines in it which would justify a whole volume of dumb obscurity :

'When last I died, and, dear, I die  
As often as from thee I go.'

'The Relic,' however, yields a better thrust at the heart, and has a universal appeal :

'All women shall adore us, and some men.'

But this soul-shaking line is embalmed not in myrrh, spikenard, and frankincense, but in a kind of literary natron. The elegy called 'The Expostulation' is specially full of lines which soar up with a rush like a rocket and explode into showers of golden rain or

starlets of crimson, azure, and emerald. Take, for example :

‘ And must she needs be false, because she ’s fair ? ’

Here was a tip from Donne which might have set up, and perhaps indeed did set up, a whole literary epoch. But this throw-forward to Congreve and to Pope in his first period is a hundred years apart from the tremendous line :

‘ And the divine impression of stolen kisses.’

That is Donne’s age at its very best. But what is one to say of a couplet with which this fascinating and intolerable poem ends :

‘ To like what you liked ; and at masks and plays  
Commend the self-same actors, the same ways.’

And then we come back to a perfect piece of early Elizabethanism :

‘ Love was as subtly caught as a disease.’

I could go on quoting for ever lines that scintillate freely and madly between Spenser and Swinburne, but will ration myself to five more. ‘ Woman’s Constancy ’ is a very poor poem ; at least, so it seems to me ; but it contains one of the most elemental couplets in Donne, and also one of the couplets which were destined by introducing the antithesis to affect the whole world of English poetry :

‘ For, having purposed change and falsehood, you  
Can have no way but falsehood to be true ? ’

On the very next page in the new edition we see Donne at work on another prophetic inspiration :

‘ Her whom the country formed, and whom the town.’



This strikes me as being very much like Dryden trying the mood of Browning, who, by the way, I have always understood was a great Donneist. Take next the superb lines with which the absurd and frousty elegy on female inconstancy ends. There is no poet but Shakespeare who could have so successfully committed such a vast and yet judicious piece of abstract irrelevancy :

‘ . . . Change is the nursery  
Of music, joy, life and eternity.’

Note that ‘ love ’ is not named. That was just the kind of hunt-the-slipper ‘ quiz ’ that Donne loved to show himself. Puritan Proteus, ecclesiastical elfin, you can never catch him ! ‘ Love’s Alchemy ’ is one of the better known of Donne’s lyrics. I have always loved it for the vague reserve of its beginning :

‘ Some that have deeper digged love’s mine than I.’

That is the kind of line to set a young man’s brain and heart whirling. It ends, however, with a couplet which makes one feel positively hysterical in the context :

‘ Hope not for mind in women ; at their best,  
Sweetness and wit, they are but mummy, possessed.’

What is one to say to this ? Is it satire ? Is it humour ? Is it metaphysic, or ‘ Is it, ain’t it,’ ‘ *Nature’s lay idiot* ’—the phrase is Donne’s own—grinning at us, not through a horse-collar, but a broken coffin-lid ?

But I am not going to try to be ‘ funny ’ or do ‘ clever Alex ’ about Donne. As well might one chaff a desiccated Capuchin in a crypt. I part with him breathless and bewildered, but always his humble servant at command.

If I must, in conclusion, say something definite and coherent about Donne as a poet it shall be this: (1) No great poet ever wrote such bad poetry. (2) No bad poet ever wrote such glorious poems, and so many of them.

That is rather a mad antithesis, but it must stand for want of something better. Just think what sort of a poem Donne would have made out of it had he seen it. He would probably have begun with his mistress's petticoat or farthingale, next have hitched his verse to a Torpedo—a fish to which he was very partial—and then have ended up among the decaying flesh and bones of some one who had been 'lapped in lead,' and turned into a kind of sepulchral clotted cream. Sir Thomas Browne skittishly calls it 'concluding in a moist relentment.'

### THE ETHICS OF ADVOCACY

*6th May 1924.*—There is no subject which mankind in general is more willing to talk about and more certain to go astray over than the Ethics of Advocacy. They will have it that, when you brief a barrister, you brief him to tell lies and to do his best to deceive the judge and the jury, and that he is a man hired, as often as not, to defeat the ends of justice. Of course, this is all rubbish. What the advocate does is to help a man to put his case as well as he can before the judge, and let the judge decide whether he was in the right or in the wrong, whether his conduct was justified or not, and again, whether, if wrong, it was still excusable. Now it is obviously right that these points of view about any human transaction should always be heard and considered. A man excited, or bewildered, or stunned by a great accusation cannot, as a rule, put these various points

of view effectively for himself. He must have some one skilled in the world's affairs and in the presentation of facts to help him. But those who make such a presentation through the arts of Advocacy must live, and therefore must be paid. The essential thing about Advocacy is that everybody knows that it is Advocacy and is paid for, and that it is only a putting of 'the other side' under observation and with proper limits. Advocacy, if it was not known to be Advocacy and paid for, would, no doubt, be a very dangerous and misleading thing, because it would not be discounted as it properly is when it is professionalized.

But necessarily the profession of Advocacy has rules and regulations of its own, and often demands considerable sacrifice. Brougham in one of his speeches, made when he was Counsel for Queen Caroline in the proceedings on the King's Divorce Bill, put some of the duties of the advocate with extraordinary poignancy. As a rule, he was much too diffuse and exaggerated a speaker for his oratory to live in the printed page, but the following passage is a really remarkable piece of declamation as well as of dialectical philosophy. There is something very fine in the way in which Brougham insists that the advocate's duty to his client is all-absorbing, and that there can be no excuse for not carrying it out to the full.

'The cause of the queen does not require recrimination [pause] at present. . . . If, however, I shall hereafter think it advisable to exercise that right—if I shall think it necessary to avail myself of means which at present I decline using—let it not be vainly supposed that I, or even the youngest member in the profession, would hesitate to resort to such a course, and fearlessly perform my duty. I have before stated to your Lordships—but surely of that

it is scarcely necessary to remind you—that an advocate in the discharge of his duty knows but one person in all the world, and that person is his client. To save that client by all means and expedients, and at all hazards and costs to other persons, and among them to himself, is his first and only duty ; and in performing this duty he must not regard the alarm, the torments, the destruction which he may bring upon others. [Here Brougham paused once more, drew himself up, and in a voice of intense earnestness proceeded.] Separating the duty of a patriot from that of an advocate, he must go on reckless of consequences, though it should be his unhappy fate to involve his country in confusion.’

This, of course, is in many respects the language of exaggeration, but there is an underlying truth. The reference in regard to recrimination was aimed at George IV. Brougham let it be known that if the Queen’s past was raked up too much, he would insist on raking up that of the King. It being known that Brougham contemplated this, he was told that it might bring on a revolution and so forth, and the passage I have just quoted is the reply to this attempt to make him limit his advocacy.

#### POPE ON THE BROAD CHURCH VIEW

10th May 1924.—It is very amusing to note how sceptical Roman Catholics like Pope and Gibbon disliked the Broad Church point of view. Pope in the *Dunciad* gives in regard to them the most poignant piece of satirical, anti-latitudinarian, theological criticism which is to be found in our literature :

‘Be that my task (replies a gloomy Clerk,  
Sworn foe to myst’ry, yet divinely dark ;  
Whose pious hope aspires to see the day  
When moral evidence shall quite decay,

And damns implicit faith, and holy lies ;  
Prompt to impose, and fond to dogmatize) :  
Let others creep by timid steps, and slow,  
On plain Experience lay foundations low,  
By common sense to common knowledge bred,  
And last, to Nature's Cause thro' Nature led.  
All-seeing in thy mists, we want no guide,  
Mother of Arrogance, and source of pride !  
We nobly take the high *priori* road,  
And reason downward, till we doubt of God :  
Make Nature still encroach upon his plan ;  
And shove him off as far as e'er we can :  
Thrust some Mechanic Cause into his place,  
Or bind in Matter, or diffuse in Space :  
Or, at one bound o'erleaping all his laws,  
Make God man's image ; man, the final Cause ;  
Find Virtue local, all Relation scorn,  
See all in self, and but for self be born :  
Of nought so certain as our Reason still,  
Of nought so doubtful as of Soul and Will.  
O hide the God still more ! and make us see  
Such as Lucretius drew, a God like thee :  
Wrapt up in self, a God without a thought,  
Regardless of our merit or default.'

## LORD HALIFAX THE TRIMMER

1st June 1924.—Here is an inscription which I have long desired to place upon the base of a monument dedicated to the memory of Lord Halifax. The monument is to be erected at the end of a woodland walk near my house. On a mound of turf will stand the memorial urn. Thus the earth and the grass of England will combine to commemorate one who wrote of them with such passionate feeling.

In case one sentence in the proposed inscription which follows may seem too cryptic, I ought perhaps to say that ' just even to Injustice enthroned ' alludes

to Halifax's apology for Charles II. and the marvellous sympathy of comprehension shown in his celebrated 'character' of that monarch. 'He could not stoop to Cruelty and Bloodshed' refers to the action he took during the Titus Oates Conspiracy and the Rye House Plot. To his eternal credit, he pleaded with all the force at his command for the victims both of Titus Oates and of the Counter-Terror, incurring in each case the suspicion of those in power at the moment :

TO

THE PIOUS AND IMMORTAL MEMORY

OF

GEORGE SAVILE, MARQUESS OF HALIFAX.

The most Inspired of Politicians and of Wits.

Passionate only in his Patriotism

He trimmed the ship of State against the violent inclinations  
alike of the Evil and the Good,

The Ignorant and the Learned.

He sought and found Moderation in the throes of  
Revolution and could be just even to

Injustice enthroned.

Yet he knew that nothing could be built upon a  
foundation of Paradox.

He could not stoop to Cruelty and Bloodshed  
Even when it seemed that out of these would come  
That National Safety which he most desired.

He thought of Justice even more than of Policy.

For Proof of the love he bore to England, look on the Right  
hand of this Mound and read of that Earth and of those spires  
of English grass which here commemorate him.

For Proof of his ample and luciferous mind, read on the Left,  
and note well what he told his countrymen of the one thing  
needful.

On the right-hand stone, let into the mound of earth supporting the urn, I mean to inscribe the celebrated passage on 'The Spire of English Grass.' On the other will be written Halifax's famous apostrophe to England to preserve the Command of the Sea.

## THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

1st June 1924.—There has floated down this Living River a good deal of personal comment both in prose and verse on Fate, Free-Will, Past, Present, and Future. I must not forget to say, however, that these soul-shaking themes were treated by Dryden with a mastery both in argument and in verse to which few men, and certainly not this one, can attain. Dryden was a born arguer. He actually had the magnificent audacity to argue on metaphysics and theology in an opera, and to argue very successfully. It may be remembered that the laughter of mankind has often been called down upon Dryden because he undertook to make *Paradise Lost* popular by re-writing it in Heroic Couplets—an offer to which Milton is grimly said to have replied: 'Let the young man tag his rhymes.'

Most people are content to laugh and leave the story at that. If, however, they will take the trouble to turn in Dryden's dramatic works to the poem entitled 'The State of Innocence and the Fall of Man—An Opera,' they will find enshrined there what is probably the best piece of serious argument ever put upon the operatic or any other stage. Dryden was always deeply moved, as indeed must be every human mind, by the tremendous problem of Fate—and Free Will—the problem which runs like a thread of dusky gold through the warp and woof of *Paradise Lost*. Following Milton, or, rather, expanding Milton, Dryden finds his opportunity in the discussion in 'Paradise'

between Adam and the 'affable Archangels,' Raphael and Gabriel. After an exordium in which Adam addresses the Archangels as 'Natives of Heaven,' the argument proceeds :

- Adam.* Freedom of Will, of all good things is best :  
 But can it be by finite Man possest ?  
 I know not how Heav'n can communicate  
 What equals Man to his Creator's State.
- Raphael.* Heav'n cannot give his boundless Pow'r away ;  
 But boundless Liberty of Choice he may.  
 So Orbs, from the first Mover, Motion take ;  
 Yet each their proper Revolutions make.
- Adam.* Grant Heav'n could once have giv'n us liberty ;  
 Are we not bounded, now, by firm Decree,  
 Since what soe'er is pre-ordain'd must be ?  
 Else Heav'n, for Man, Events might pre-ordain,  
 And Man's Free-will might make those Orders vain.
- Raphael.* Heav'n, by fore-knowing what will surely be,  
 Does only first Effects in Causes see ;  
 And finds, but does not make Necessity.  
 Creation is of Pow'r, and Will th' Effect,  
 Fore-knowledge only of his Intellect ;  
 His prescience makes not, but supposes things ;  
 Infers Necessity to be ; not brings.  
 Thus thou art not constrained to Good or Ill :  
 Causes which work th' Effect force not the Will.
- Adam.* The Force unseen, and distant, I confess ;  
 But the long Chain makes not the bondage less.  
 Ev'n Man himself may to himself seem free,  
 And think that Choice which is Necessity.
- Gabriel.* And who but Man should judge of Man's free  
 State ?
- Adam.* I find that I can chuse to love, or hate ;  
 Obey, or disobey ; do good, or ill ;  
 Yet such a Choice is but Consent, not Will.  
 I can but choose what he has first design'd,  
 For he, before that Choice, my Will confin'd.
- Gabriel.* Such impious Fancies, where they entrance gain,  
 Make Heav'n, all pure, the Crimes to pre-ordain.



*Adam.* Far, far from me be banish'd such a Thought :  
 I only argue to be better taught.  
 Tho' no Constraint from Heav'n, or Causes be,  
 Heav'n may prevent that Ill he does foresee :  
 And, not preventing, tho' he does not cause,  
 He seems to will that Men should break his laws.

*Gabriel.* Heav'n may permit, but not to Ill consent :  
 For hind'ring Ill, he would all Choice prevent.  
 'Twere to unmake, to take away the Will.

*Adam.* Better constrain'd to Good, than free to Ill.

*Raphael.* But what Reward or Punishment could be,  
 If Man to neither Good nor Ill were free ?  
 Th' Eternal Justice could decree no Pain  
 To him whose Sins it self did first ordain ;  
 And Good compell'd, could no Reward exact :  
 His Pow'r would shine in Goodness, not thy Act.  
 Our Task is done, obey, and in that Choice  
 Thou shalt be blest, and Angels shall rejoice.

*(Raphael and Gabriel fly up in the Cloud : the other  
 angels go off.)*

*Adam.* Hard State of Life ! Since Heav'n foreknows my  
 Will,  
 Why am I not ty'd up from doing Ill ?  
 Why am I trusted with myself at large,  
 When he's more able to sustain the Charge ?  
 Since Angels fell, whose Strength was more than  
 mine,  
 'Twould show more Grace my Frailty to confine.  
 Fore-knowing the Success, to leave me free,  
 Excuses him, and yet supports not me.

*(To him Eve.)*

*Eve.* Behold, my Heart's dear Lord, how high the Sun  
 Is mounted, yet our Labour not begun.  
 The Ground, unbid, gives more than we can ask ;  
 But Work is Pleasure when we chuse our Task.  
 Nature, not bounteous now, but lavish grows,  
 Our Paths with Flow'rs she prodigally strows ;  
 With Pain we lift up our entangled Feet ;  
 While cross our Walks the shooting Branches meet.

That last speech of Eve is delightful beyond words. It shows that Dryden had humour as well as pathos and insight. How many a time before and since has the woman at home turned with a sigh from the endless metaphysic of her husband and his guests to walk in the garden, and how often has she returned to find them still at it, for not all arguers can manage to fly off into a real as well as a philosophic cloud !

### LORD CLIVE

*2nd June 1924.*—Clive has always interested me very deeply. Part of this interest has come, no doubt, from the fact that he is the patron saint of my family. He saved Sutton and the estate for the Stracheys, and was always held up to me by paternal tradition as our hero. The first Sir Henry Strachey was his private secretary, and the two men were devoted to each other, and Strachey ultimately married a near relative of Lady Clive. Later he entered Parliament for one of Clive's boroughs, and also became Clive's executor and the guardian of his infant son—the man who in later life married the heiress of the historic Powys family and became Earl of Powys.

The striking thing about Clive from our point of view was that, just after he had appointed Henry Strachey as his private secretary to go out to India with him, he heard that the Strachey estate was in great difficulties, that Henry Strachey's father had mortgaged it to the whole of its value, and that unless it was redeemed by a payment of £12,000—a great sum in those days—it would pass in one year into the possession of the mortgagee. On hearing this, though he had no real experience of his new secretary, Clive, with a splendid trust in youth and, of course, also a

deep belief in the family feeling centring in an estate, advanced the £12,000 to Strachey, declaring that he would be able to pay it back later, which, of course, he did. That was the kind of fine gesture which is oftener found in novels than in real life—a trite remark, but true.

My next good reason, though not quite so good, for admiring Clive is that he was a master of English prose. As has lately been discovered, he inspired some of the greatest things in Orme, the Thucydides of the Honourable East India Company. Very probably the magnificent passages describing first the Black Hole of Calcutta, then the Battle of Plassey, and finally the overthrow of Surajah Dowlah by Meer Jaffir were actually written by Clive. Finally, Clive was unquestionably a great Imperial statesman and had a marvellous flair for Asian politics.

If these are not good enough reasons for liking a picturesque, historical character, I do not know how liking can be bred! After all, what can there be stronger than the freemasonry of Style? But if one likes Clive, one cannot help also both liking, if also in part detesting, Macaulay's famous essay. It will continue to live in literature because the author was a man of genius. But when we read and thrill, we must never forget that it is not about the real Clive. The figure before us is as essentially a work of art as, say, Shakespeare's Henry v. The general impression which we get from Macaulay, and which he deliberately intended us to receive, is that of a boorish and illiterate soldier of fortune, ill-bred and ill-read, but saved from the disconsiderations of such a character by flashes not only of military genius but of statesmanship and of a true sense of patriotism. Macaulay's Clive has the coarseness of grain and the luxurious vulgarity of the conventional Nabob. No one would

gather from the essay that here was a man who in his writing was not only scrupulously careful of the art of composition, but possessed a natural felicity of style as well as the magic power of conveying to paper that passion with which his whole nature vibrated.

There is hardly any man of action who has contrived to put such a thrill of emotion into his phrases as Clive did. It is on record that Chatham, who listened to one of Clive's speeches, declared that 'it was one of the most finished pieces of eloquence he had ever heard in the House of Commons.' But in truth this declaration was hardly wanted. One has only to read the speech in question to recognize its extraordinary force and fascination. There is no excuse for any suggestion that Clive was indebted to the help of others in the composition of his speeches, for his letters and despatches, of which happily we have a vast supply, are filled with passages equally eloquent, pregnant, and 'luciferous.' Take as an example Clive's description of the physical miseries from which he suffered. In one of his last letters to my great-grandfather, the first Sir Henry Strachey, his 'most devoted comrade and friend,' he writes, 'How miserable is my condition! I have a disease which makes life insupportable, but which my doctors tell me won't shorten it one hour.' These are words that pierce the heart and are somehow clothed with an emotional force beyond their functions and their offices—their mere grammatical meaning. Take again the phrase in one of Clive's later letters to his father, in which, when asking to be remembered to his mother 'in the most affectionate manner,' he adds: 'She has acted a great part in life.' He goes on to speak of 'the uniformity of her conduct with regard to her children' as her special virtue. Could a mother want higher praise more nobly expressed? Were there

uniformity of conduct in all parents, how many family tragedies should we avert ! Take again these words in a letter to Strachey written in 1772, words which not only move us, but have at this moment a peculiar appropriateness for all who desire that Clive's work for the Empire shall endure : ' I will not patiently stand by and see a great Empire, acquired by great abilities, perseverance and resolution, lost by ignorance and indolence.'

Here are words taken from Clive's address to the officers who in the First Mutiny asked for more money—words which sting like a blood-knot on a lash : ' You have stormed no town, and found the money there ; neither did you find it in the plains of Plassey.' But let us not for a moment suppose that Clive in his letters was always riding the high horse. He could be as lively as he could be severe. We find him, for example, speaking of his chief rival in the East India Company's Directorate as ' Sir Hannibal Hot Pot.' That delightful phrase is contained in a letter to Orme the historian, whom Clive kept well supplied not only with letters, memoranda, and speeches, but with plans and drawings. It is indeed one of Sir George Forrest's most memorable discoveries in his *Life of Clive*, that the soldier statesman was the power behind the pen of Orme.

No doubt Orme was endowed by nature with a remarkable gift of style, but it is extraordinarily interesting to find how much he owed to the direct inspiration of Clive. Fastidious as was Orme in the written word, he would often adopt whole pages of Clive's ' material to serve ' with only the slightest of verbal alterations. All that minute history of the early transactions at Arcot and on the coast of Coromandel is now seen to have been derived directly from the principal actor, Captain Clive. Yet no one

ever detected that the stately march of Orme's inimitable historic prose—a prose medium essentially more distinguished than that of either Gibbon or Johnson—was diluted by some inferior strain. Who would gather from Macaulay that the subject of his essay was a man who could not only think and act, but write as well as—or, in my opinion, a great deal better than—the great Chatham himself?

#### AN EPISTOLARY GEM

*3rd June 1924.*—Here is a supplement to what I have already written about Clive's prose style. He was an admirable letter writer. Perhaps the best and most perfect example is to be found in a five-lined letter in which Clive closes his controversy with the half-mutinous officers who tried to extract a larger share of prize-money after the battle of Plassey—the men at whose heads while they were mutinous he flung the rebuke quoted above as an example of style. When Clive stood firm, these officers made a complete surrender. It was then, but not till then, that Clive showed his magnanimity :

'GENTLEMEN,—I have ever been desirous of the love and good opinion of my officers, and have often pursued their interest in preference to my own. What passed the other day is now forgotten, and I shall always be glad of an opportunity of convincing you how much

I am, Gentlemen,  
Your most obedient. humble servant,  
ROBT. CLIVE.'

MOORSHEDABAD, *9th July 1757.*

Clive, following the Oriental fashion, was apt to end his letters with the phrase: 'What can I say more?' What can I say more, after quoting this perfect example of epistolary eloquence?

## ON TRANSLATING RACINE

10th June 1924.—Apropos of Racine, it is curious to think that his Plays were not translated into English verse in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, though clearly they had many admirers here. Perhaps there was a feeling by our poets that if they wanted to go back to the Greeks in general, and Euripides in particular, they would not go via Paris or Versailles, but by a direct cross-country route. I am somewhat supported in this view by Dryden's example, and also by the fact that, when *Phædra* was put on the stage in the last years of the seventeenth century, a translation was made by an Oxford man, and there was nothing said about Racine's great play. And yet the theme evidently interested the London wits as well as the University scholars, for Prior wrote perhaps the most charming of his Epilogues or Prologues to this Euripides revival. His lines were spoken by the immortal Mrs. Oldfield—the great actress whose funeral in Westminster Abbey was attended by Voltaire, and on whom he wrote his wonderful poem contrasting the fate of an actress in England with that of one in France. The English actress slept in the Abbey with kings, councillors, and princes; the French actress was treated as an outcast, or even a criminal, and buried at dead of night in a pit without one word of blessing or of hope from the Church.

Here are the roguish words with which Mrs. Oldfield introduced *Phaedra* to the London audience :

‘LADIES, to-night your pity I implore  
For one, who never troubled you before ;  
An Oxford man, extremely read in Greek,  
Who from Euripides makes *Phaedra* speak ;  
And comes to town to let us moderns know,  
How woman lov’d two thousand years ago.  
If that be all, said I, e’en burn your play :  
Egad ! we know all that, as well as they :  
Show us the youthful, handsome charioteer,  
Firm in his seat, and running his career ;  
Our souls would kindle with as generous flames,  
As e’er inspired the ancient Grecian dames :  
Every *Ismena* would resign her breast ;  
And every dear *Hippolitus* be blest.’

She spoke in the character of *Ismena*, the counterpart of the frigid and lachrymose *Aricie* in Racine’s drama. One cannot help wishing that the solemn Racine could have been imported to London and submitted to the bewitching glances of Mrs. Oldfield across the footlights. What would he have made of it ? Probably nothing except that we were barbarous islanders, unable to understand and unfit to touch the holy mystery of the Dramatic Unities. And lastly, how delighted the naughty Prior, who always saw the humour of the solemn Frenchman, would have been at thinking that he had rubbed ‘ *M. Hippolyte*,’ as Dryden used to call Racine, upon the raw ! All the same, and though my natural impulse is to be on the side of the humorous and against the solemn, it is no good to pretend that Racine could not sound depths in the human heart of which the sparkling Prior not only had not the faintest conception, but never could have had any conception. Racine’s heart may have been of stone, but he could draw blood from it.



SEEING THE DOCTOR: HIPPOCRATES AND THE  
MEDICAL PROFESSION

*4th July 1924.*—Seeing the doctor always has in it a touch of the drama. You feel, not only that you are acting a part, and either making yourself out better or worse than you really are,—in a word, presenting something to an audience of one,—but you also know that the doctor himself is bound to be doing very much the same thing. He has to act a part. If he did not, he might fill his patient with dismay. He must appear cool when he is anxious, at leisure when he is hurried, happy when he is miserable, and, most of all, must appear to be in perfect vigour of body and mind when he is feeling wretchedly ill and mentally disturbed. Therefore, really, the doctor and the patient, till they get to the actual grips of surgery or of medicine, are parties to a little play. This is specially the case in the sick-room and when the patient is in bed, or sitting arrayed in dressing-gown and slippers with all the paraphernalia of sickness from the medicine glass to the clinical thermometer and the temperature chart at his side, and the nurse discreetly standing at the foot of the bed like a kind of Medical Assessor. The experienced doctor and the experienced patient, though they say nothing about that either to themselves or to each other, know in their hearts that the blue or white-clad figure ‘half withdrawn’ is probably comparing them both with previous cases, very likely to the disparagement of them both, or else adumbrating generalities on life and death like the chorus in a Greek play.

Let us be thankful that the rules of the game do not oblige the nurse to throw incense upon some

altar and sing or chant reflections upon the follies of youth and what they lead to, on the selfishness or the wickedness of mankind and womankind, and generally revelling in reflections on the nature of human beings and their follies and misdeeds,—‘ blind children of the blind.’

There is no place in which the nature of the Profession, and especially of the General Practitioner, can be better studied and understood than in the works of Hippocrates. Also none shows us better the Greek spirit in its completeness. They make us realize that in the matter of pure observation the Greek showed as much mastery as he did in abstract philosophy, in poetry, in history, and in the figurative arts. Other early races have noble achievements to their credit in the exploration of special portions of the great crypt in which mankind is interned. The Greeks, and only the Greeks, proved themselves supreme *in every form of* intellectual activity of which men are capable. They were the greatest of all the foundation-layers of knowledge. They seem always to have thought the right thing in the right way. Whatever they touched they illuminated. Enlightenment was of the essence of their contract with Humanity. The pre-Socratic philosophers by pure abstract reasoning ‘pre-discovered’ many of the things which the modern scientist has only arrived at by piling Pelion upon Ossa in the titanic labours of trial and error. Again and again the modern man of science, the natural philosopher, the economist, finds when he reaches the summit of the mountain he is climbing that a Greek sent an arrow to that very spot two thousand years before.

When Lord Armstrong, at the end of his life, came to the conclusion that the material world was the child of movement, and that one form of matter was

differentiated from another purely by writing it in a kind of cosmic Morse alphabet conceived in terms of vibration, he was, after all, only saying what Anaximander had said before him. Perpetual flux, change, and movement form the flying foundations of the eloping world. We swim in a universal whirlpool.

But it is not only the latest discoveries as to time and space that are apt to sound like echoes of the happy guesses of the Greeks. The economists, the students of ethics and statecraft, find their *Principia* in some golden phrase that fell, as it were, almost unconsciously from the mouth of the Stagirite. He showed fundamentals by the wayside in the course of his magnificent progress to the shrine of reality—the shrine where human society was to be accommodated to actuality and the laws of the *Polis* justified to the self-regarding instincts of the individual. And while this was going on from what one may call the point of view of practical philosophy, the glorious firm of ‘Plato late Socrates’ was tracing eagle paths in the thrilling empyrean of pure thought.

One would have concluded, however, that medicine, at any rate, was free from the anticipations of the Greek. There at least was a science which we moderns could claim as all our own. Yet, as a matter of fact, in respect of essential principles the Greeks have their way with the Origins of Medicine as of Philosophy. Hippocrates told his fellows and the world at large that the art of medicine must grow through the observation of the needs and diseases of men, and not through the acceptance of vague generalizations, rigid hypotheses or pedantic assumptions. Though Hippocrates was not allowed the freedom of dissection, and in many other ways his

observation was checked, so accurate were his observations of the symptoms of disease that in many respects they have never been bettered.

Hippocrates describes the look of the countenance, the patient's position in bed, the movements of his hands, and a dozen other aspects of suffering, and compares them with those of the body in health. 'A sharp nose, hollow eyes, collapsed temples; the ears cold, contracted, and their lobes turned out; the skin about the forehead being rough, distended, and parched; the colour of the whole face being green, black, livid, or lead-coloured.' Hippocrates after the dread inventory tells us that such a face, unless it can be at once accounted for by some special reason, like want of food or sleep, shows that the patient will surely die. This is the famous *facies Hippocratica*.

Who was it, I wonder, who told Shakespeare, or was he using traditional sources, when he makes Mrs. Quickly tell us of Falstaff's end. 'His nose was as sharp as a pen.' The description of unfavourable signs to be read from the patient's position in bed are very curious and, I believe, correct. 'Lying upon his back, with hands, neck, and legs extended,' is bad. So is wishing to sit erect at the climax of the disease, especially in pneumonia, and also 'waving his hands before his face, or hunting as if gathering bits of straw or picking the nap from the coverlet.' 'For after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way,' says Shakespeare's Hostess.

All this is wonderful, but perhaps even more wonderful is the fact that Hippocrates should have seen so clearly what was the ethical and civic duty of the physician to his patient and to the public at

large. He put the whole system into that physician's oath which cannot be bettered even now.

One of the first things in the oath is the promise to make no concealment of the practice and knowledge of the healing art, but to pass that knowledge on to others. It is true that these others must be bound by an oath to act according to the law of medicine ; but this stipulation was inserted, as will be seen from the context, not to make a *caste* rule nor to create a monopoly, but to prevent the practice of medicine from falling into the hands of impostors and exploiters—persons who were not bound by the oath to consider first and above all ‘the benefit of the patient.’ Next comes the item of the oath under which the physician is bound to act the part of a gentleman and a good citizen during his daily practice :

‘ Into whatever houses I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of the sick, and will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief and corruption.’

There follows an equally important obligation upon the man who sees his fellows so intimately, as does the doctor, in the stress of pain, in the weakness of disease, in the agonies of bereavement, in the reflex action of sorrow and remorse :

‘ Whatever, in connection with my professional practice or not in connection with it, I see or hear, in the life of men, which ought not to be spoken of abroad, I will not divulge, as reckoning that all such should be kept secret.’

Hippocrates set his face like flint against the temptations of the profession—temptations not merely to exploit human suffering, but to forget the benefit of

the patient and the interests of society in the pursuit of science, or, still more, of personal ambition. Again, Hippocrates realized the intensity, the danger of diverging into magic and superstition—a divergence into which the patient often unwittingly inclines to urge upon the doctor.

But to say this in terms too general would be to create another superstition in the name of anti-superstition. The doctor, above all people, must keep an open mind, as we have proved so clearly in our own day. To call psycho-therapy, psycho-analysis, and auto-suggestion superstitions because these great and illuminating discoveries in the fields of pathology have sometimes gone to the heads of their discoverers like new wine, would be a fatal error, and one which Hippocrates would have been the first to denounce. Though the door must be shut against superstition, it must always stand open to discovery, and even if a little superstition temporarily creeps in through the aperture, that must never be made an excuse for creating the debilitating atmosphere of the closed room.

In a book that I have lately been reading on Hippocrates by an American physician, Dr. Osborn Taylor, I find an admirable dedication: ‘To the noble profession, whose gospel is the healing of mankind, whose honour is the Hippocratic oath.’ That is well deserved. I say, without the slightest fear that I may be overstating my case, that there is no profession which is more exposed to the temptation to forget honour, humanity, and kindness than the medical profession, and none in which the exploitation of human suffering is easier. *Yet there is none in which the temptation is so triumphantly withstood.* Let this be remembered by the public when they feel inclined to sneer at medical etiquette, and to speak

of it as if it were a code for maintaining selfishness and enrichment.

Medical etiquette is the salvation of the patient. It is the one thing which stands between him and the dangers of exploitation. It is what makes him and his sufferings hold the dominant part in the dread dramas of pathology.

### A CONVERSATIONAL ACCIDENT

*5th July 1924.*—Here is my latest day-dream. It came to me in the form of a conversational accident. In the smoking-room of a Liner, a tall, authoritative, zealous Jesuit Priest explained the teachings of the Church on the doctrine of the Eucharist, and traced its various implications, psychological, physical, metaphysical, and mystical. ‘Your theory sounds well enough,’ said the little man in the corner, who up till then had been quite silent, ‘but there are three people who do not believe in it. I am one; you are the other. The third is Jesus Christ.’

We blinked at each other just as if some one had flashed magnesium powder. The Priest hesitated for a moment—then stood up, made the sign of the cross on his breast, raised his two fingers, blessed us all in silence and walked stonily out.

‘Obliged to break off the action and withdraw his troops,’ said the General. ‘Very unpleasant. I’ve had to do it myself before now.’

## POSTSCRIPT

THERE is a silent and hidden River of Life which underneath follows the surface stream, keeping pace with it all the way, as does the subconscious element in human life. Matthew Arnold knew this and has told us of it in one of the greatest of his poems :

‘ Fate, which foresaw  
How frivolous a baby man would be,  
By what distractions he would be possess’d,  
How he would pour himself in every strife,  
And well-nigh change his own identity ;  
That it might keep from his capricious play  
His genuine self, and force him to obey,  
Even in his own despite, his being’s law,  
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast  
The unregarded River of our Life  
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way ;  
And that we should not see  
The buried stream, and seem to be  
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,  
Though driving on with it eternally.’

Then with a characteristic sense of the tragic irony he has called forth, Arnold uses words which I shall only spoil if I try to summarize them :

‘ But often, in the world’s most crowded streets,  
But often, in the din of strife,  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life,  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course ;



A longing to enquire  
 Into the mystery of this heart that beats  
 So wild, so deep in us, to know  
 Whence our thoughts come and where they go.  
 And many a man in his own breast then delves,  
 But deep enough, alas, none ever mines :  
 And we have been on many thousand lines,  
 And we have shown on each talent and power,  
 But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
 Been on our own line, have we been ourselves ;  
 Hardly had skill to utter one of all  
 The nameless feelings that course through our breast,  
 But they course on for ever unexpress'd.  
 And long we try in vain to speak and act  
 Our hidden self, and what we say and do  
 Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true : '

And then at the last he consoles us with the thought  
 that every now and then we do become aware of  
 the hidden river :

' A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast  
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :  
 The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
 And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we  
 know.

A man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
 And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
 The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
 Wherein he doth for ever chase  
 That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.  
 An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
 And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows  
 The Hills where his life rose,  
 And the Sea where it goes.'

Though I follow Shakespeare in declaring that I  
 have given my heart another youth by my daily

digressions, *i.e.* by my sailings upon the River of Life, I am well aware that all the time the other life, the unseen River of Life, was below me, and that I could not chronicle it, or play with it, or revel in its current.

I admit that there is a patent ambiguity here. Yet it is one which is not unreal because it is insoluble.

Anyway, it is fit that I should quote Matthew Arnold in this Postscript to my book, for his hand has been in mine throughout this writing. His verse, I am told, is not liked by the world just now ; but with me he is always in fashion, and has been since I knew an Iamb from an Anapaest, and that is over half a century. And so let me end with one more of Arnold's many references to the Rivers of Life :

‘ But the majestic River floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . . Then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents ; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcell’d Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foil’d circuitous wanderer—till at last  
The long’d for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new bath’d stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.’









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